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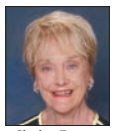
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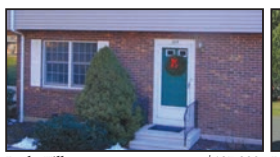
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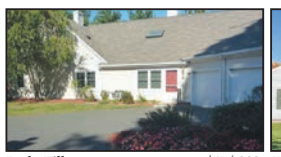
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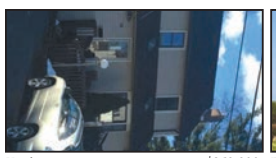
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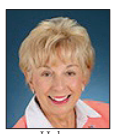
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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"We're learning skills in case, God forbid, there's an emergency situation."

- Sarah Swiatek

See story page 6

ON THE COVER

Stevens School Student Council member Becca Markowitz, 10, helps Husky Hero Olivia DiBiase, 7, prepare for her turn at reading the morning announcements to the school.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
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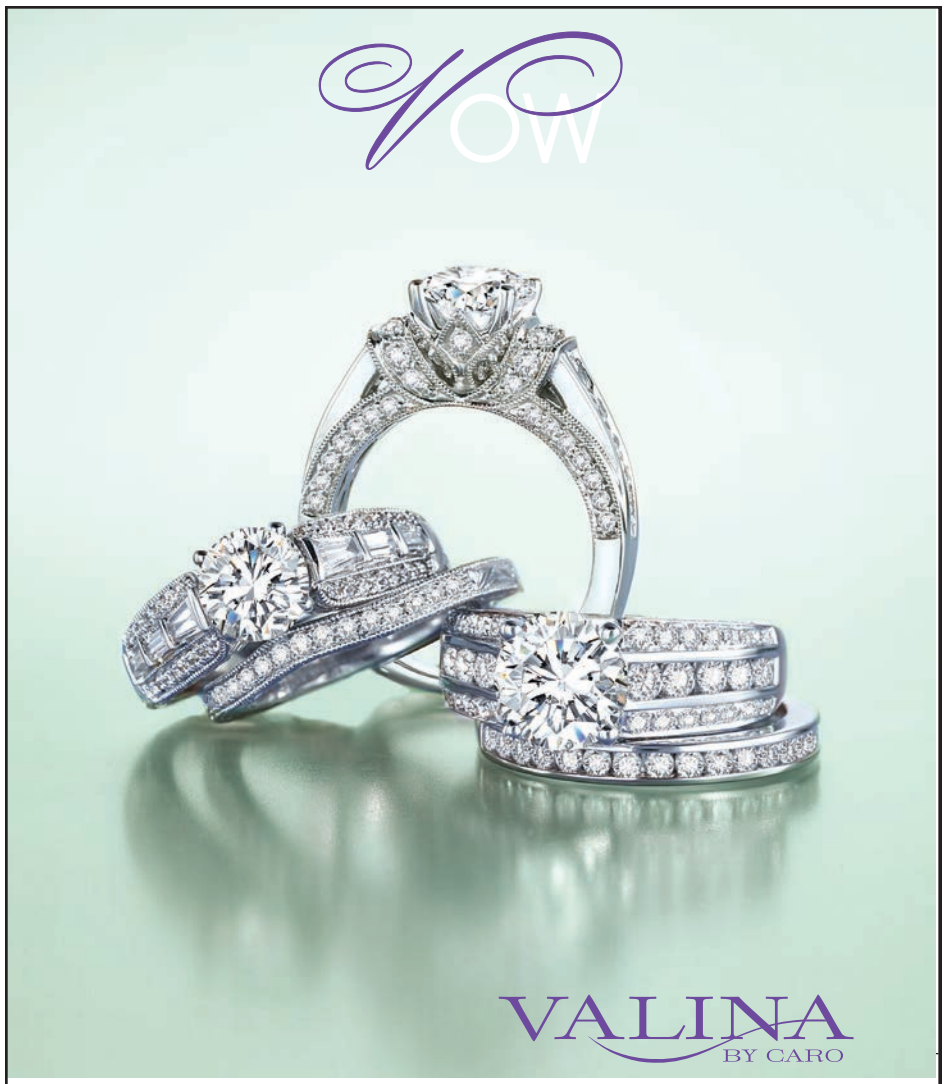

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Getting ready to report

WFSB-TV 3 reporter Nicole Nalepa visits middle school students

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

WFSB-TV 3 traffic and news reporter Nicole Nalepa visited Griswold Middle School to speak about her experiences as a reporter and give advice for those looking to go into broadcasting.

Photos by Allie Rivera

Students at Griswold Middle School excitedly gathered in the technology education room. They surrounded the morning news setup that they use every day, with a desk and microphone placed in front of a blue cloth screen.

The facility may be familiar, but the person seated behind the desk was a new face in the room.

Nicole Nalepa, a traffic and news reporter for WFSB-TV 3, spent an afternoon speaking to students involved with the school's television production club about her life as a reporter.

"We have a major network just down the road a way and had not taken advantage of it," technology education teacher Steven Patarini said.

The students who stayed after school to meet with Nalepa consisted of mostly female volunteers who work the school's morning announcements each day.

"When it's working, every homeroom teacher logs on and sees the announcements throughout the school," Patarini said.

"I have a core of about four or five girls who come in and type up the scripts, make sure the scenes all work, all of that. It's pretty much run by the students. I just keep them organized."

"I learned from her that it's very competitive so you need to push yourself and get experience to show them what you can do."
–Annie Ensign

When Nalepa entered the classroom, she was both surprised and excited to see the facility that Patarini and his students have set up and compared it to her own experiences when she was in middle school.

"I used to play with my girlfriends in my basement," she said with a small laugh. "The fact that they have middle schoolers doing things like this, it's great."

Patarini was eager to bring in an experienced professional to meet with his students after seeing how many of them were committed to strengthening the school's television production facility. When Nalepa heard about the opportunity to visit the classroom, she jumped at the chance.

"I almost went down the path of being a teacher, so this gives me my fill of that," she said.

Nalepa recalled from her own days as a middle school student how important it was to her when visitors came in to speak about their professional lives.

"I remember in school what a profound impact it made. It really influenced me when people would come into the classroom," she said. "I feel like people gave back to me when I was young, so I want it to go full circle."

She spoke to the roomful of students about her experiences growing up in the Berkshires and watching her idol, Katie Couric, do the news every day.

"She was the first female to anchor the evening news and it was a huge deal," Nalepa told the enthralled students. "It was such a big moment for women."

As a child, she was active in theater and attended Westfield State University, originally majoring in education and music. Shortly into her time there, she decided to make a switch to communication.

"I changed my major in college and I never looked back," she said.

During her time at Westfield,

Nalepa applied for an internship position with CBS News in New York and was not only accepted, but was placed in an internship at the CBS Evening News with Couric. Part of her duties on the job were to deliver scripts to Couric each night.

"So here I am, working every night delivering scripts to my icon. It was a dream come true," Nalepa said.

"To grow up watching her on TV, then to see her every night, it was pretty wild. Seeing what she did and meeting a lot of people that she worked with really pushed me."

After graduation, Nalepa took a job as a general assignment reporter and night producer in western Massachusetts before accepting her current position as a traffic reporter with WFSB nearly two years ago.

"I'd never done traffic before, but I said I'll learn," she told the students.

Throughout her talk with the pupils, Nalepa stressed the importance of hard work and taking positions that are not always as glamorous as they may have hoped. She told them that she wakes up for work every day at 3 a.m.

"We work during the holidays, we work during the big snow storms. It's what we signed up to do," she said. "You really want to take advantage of all opportunities and prove that you want to learn."

For many of the students, that message was well received, especially for those who hope to follow in Nalepa's footsteps one day.

"I want to get into broadcasting," eighth-grader Annie Ensign, 13, said. "I learned from her that it's very competitive so you need to push yourself and get experience to show them what you can do."

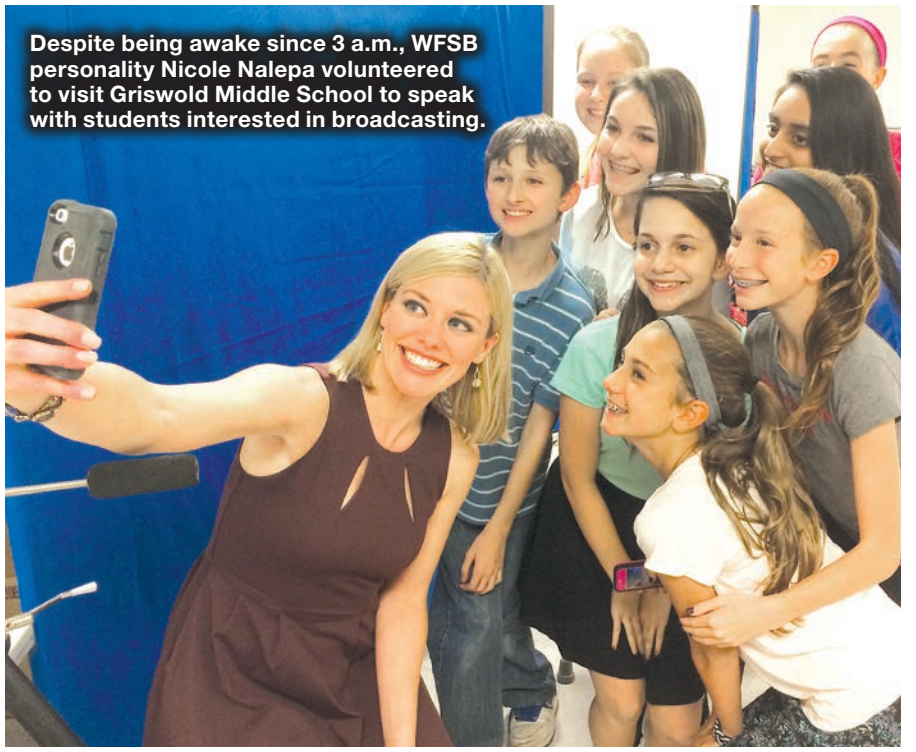
"Even if it's hard, still try because you might be able to get it in the future," Dylan Martin, 12, added.

Nalepa explained the other jobs in the industry she has held, including producing, before getting to go on camera.

"I got to do a little bit of everything. You may not get that on-air job right away," she said.

Part of her role in producing meant that she needed to stay up to date with changing technology in the industry, which Patarini works to keep up with and provide for his students.

"Technology is constantly changing. You constantly have to be informed and up to date, not just with headlines, but with technology," Nalepa said. "It's one thing learning about it in school and another to be there and experience it first hand."



Despite being awake since 3 a.m., WFSB personality Nicole Nalepa volunteered to visit Griswold Middle School to speak with students interested in broadcasting.

Students walked away from the afternoon with a clearer understanding of all that goes into creating an on-air news report and the knowledge that it requires a great deal of hard work to achieve success.

"Even if you don't get the thing you want at first, don't give up on it," 12-year-old Maddie Poulin said.

"Try everything because it makes you respect everything that they do and it increases your knowledge," eighth-grader Keya Saxena, 13, added.

Having the opportunity to go into a school and share her experiences is part of what brought Nalepa to WFSB in the first place. She hopes to be able to give back in Rocky Hill more often.

"They always encourage us to go out and help in the community, so right away I was like, this is my station," she said. "I really love my job. It's like my family away from home when I'm at work."RHL

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Members of the Medical Reserve Corps volunteer their time at a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War at Bradley International Airport.

Ready to serve

Volunteers give their time to Capitol Region Medical Reserve Corps

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Most people in town probably don't know that the Capitol Region Medical Reserve Corps exists, but they can rest assured that it does and that the volunteers who make up this organization are ready to respond on short notice to help in times of need.

The CR-MRC consists of volunteer medical and public health professionals, as well as non-medical support staff. Their skills and expertise can be called upon for community events, as well as in emergencies or other times of need.

They function as part of local emergency preparedness teams to supplement existing public safety and public health resources. The corps is structured, trained and equipped to deploy a medical emergency response team to manage the health consequences of an incident during its first 48 to 96 hours.

These volunteers also assist at local public health initiatives such as immunization clinics and prevention activities. They can be assigned to provide medical services at emergency shelters following a storm or any other major incident.

The Medical Reserve Corps program is a nationwide initiative. Katherine McCormack is the director of the CR-MRC. She previously served as health director for the city

of Hartford and is an adjunct faculty member at the University of New Haven. She is a nurse and has a degree in public health.

She explained that this unit is somewhat different from most other MRCs around the country because it is not connected to a public health district, but rather to the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

"The MRC mission is dedicated to establishing a team of local medical and public health professionals," she said. "We have somewhere between 200 and 250 on the roster."

They participate in drills to prepare for such things as storms and ebola and anthrax incidents. The MRC is primarily intended for activation during a major emergency.

It can mobilize in full or in part, depending upon the specific need. McCormack said her organization receives a great deal of logistical support from the Governor's Horse Guard and Governor's Foot Guard. She has at her disposal a mobile field office and 55-bed mobile hospital.

Professions involved in this effort include physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, dentists, veterinarians, emergency medical technicians and mental health workers.

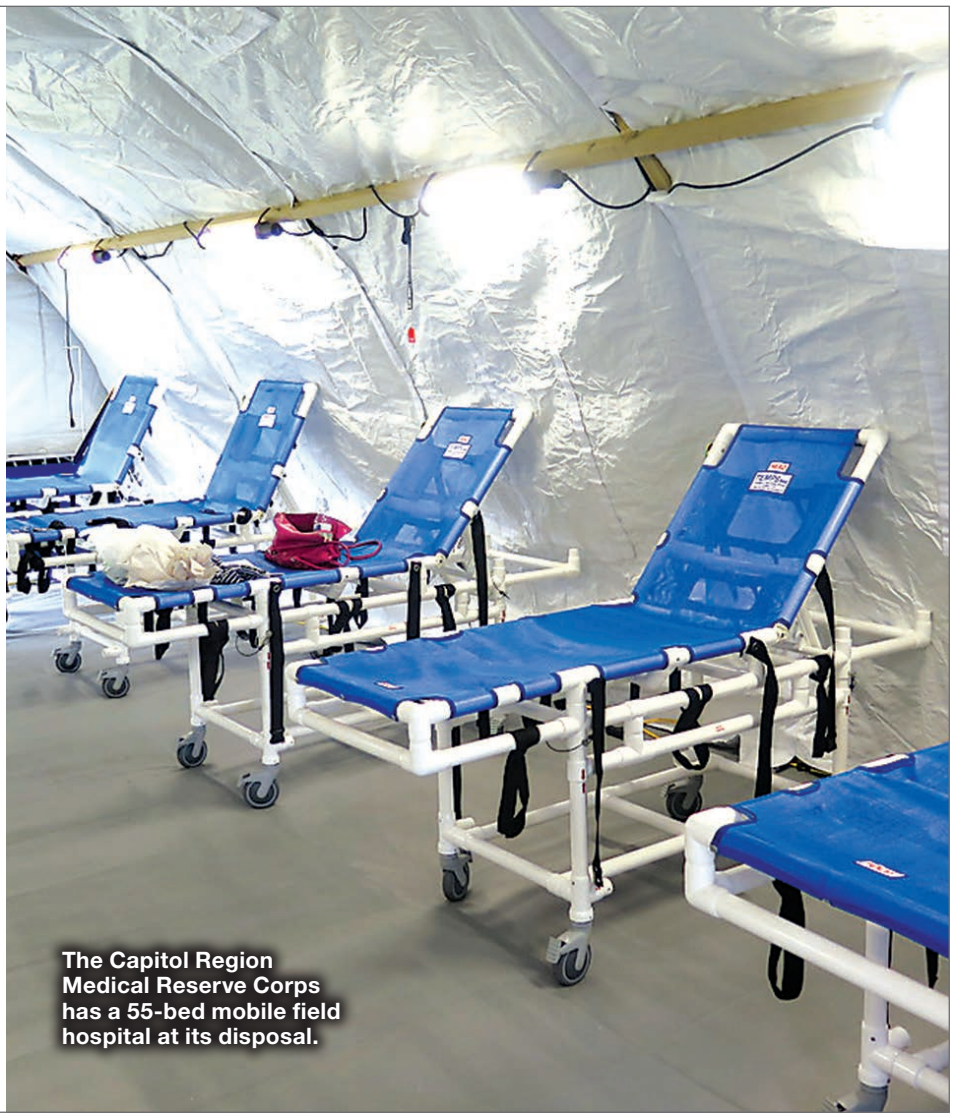
One such volunteer is Sarah Swiatek of Rocky Hill. She has been a pharmacist since 2001 and has managed the pharmacy inside the ShopRite supermarket in Waterbury for the past dozen years.

"I graduated from UConn's first doctor of pharmacy class," she said. "I opened an email one day and there was a little piece of information [about the MRC]. I enjoy volunteering."

Swiatek was also interested in meeting other health care professionals, so she contacted the organization and signed up. She likened it to the military reserves.

"I've been a member for just a little over a year," she said. "I wanted to join this because I don't get a lot of hands-on time with my patients."

She's also been the pharmacy lead for the past five years for the Connecticut Mission of Mercy, which is part of the Connecticut Foundation for Dental Outreach. It conducts a twice-yearly clinic.



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Swiatek helped out at a flu clinic in East Lyme through the MRC. She explained that pharmacists are allowed to inoculate adults with all current vaccines.

"[The MRC] is for any kind of wartime response, natural disasters, sheltering for floods or hurricanes, anything like that. This was created shortly after Sept. 11, 2001, by President [George W.] Bush," she said. "We're learning skills in case, God forbid, there's an emergency situation."

Training is ongoing. One of the sessions she attended was on pediatric disaster response.

Sarah Swiatek of Rocky Hill is a pharmacist.

"We're learning skills in case, God forbid, there's an emergency situation."

–Sarah Swiatek

Several MRC volunteers provided first aid and triage services in July at a 50th anniversary commemoration of the Vietnam War held at Bradley International Airport. The team was assigned to assist the Air National Guard that day.

"It was a great experience for me because I'm new to this," Swiatek said.

She already has her Pharm D. degree and is currently studying for a master's degree in medication therapy management through the University of Florida.

"Once my master's is done, I intend to become more involved," she said.

Courtney Cudmore of Wethersfield is another CR-MRC volunteer. She is a certified emergency medical technician who works in a group home for special needs adults and serves as a duty officer with the Wethersfield Volunteer Ambulance Association.

"When I was 21, I wanted to be on the federal disaster response team," she said.

Cudmore enjoys traveling and helping people. The Wethersfield High School graduate was not selected for that federal program, but a friend told her about the Medical Reserve Corps and she decided to check it out.

"I have been a member for about four years. I have done a lot of training with them," she said. "I've been lucky that we haven't needed to do it yet."

She wants to test her skills under the pressure of an emergency situation but, as with the ambulance service, she is well aware that something bad has to happen for such an opportunity to arise.

"I'm ready for it. The rest of the MRC is, too," she said.

She works weekends, and that sometimes limits her ability to attend events and training sessions. Cudmore helped out in the town's emergency shelter at the Pitkin Community Center when electrical power was out for more than a week following a freak late October snowstorm in 2011.

"I was on the ambulance for that snowstorm. It was crazy," she recalled.

She said the MRC is made up of a diverse group of people.

"It's really awesome to sit in a room together," she said.

"I really like to serve my community in any way I can. I really fell into health care and volunteering. I love it," Cudmore said. "The reason why I volunteer is because it's neighbors helping neighbors." **RHL**

Anyone interested in joining the CR-MRC is encouraged to visit getreadycapitolregion.org. Questions may be referred to Katherine McCormack at kmcorr4040@aol.com.

Courtney Cudmore of Wethersfield is an emergency medical technician.

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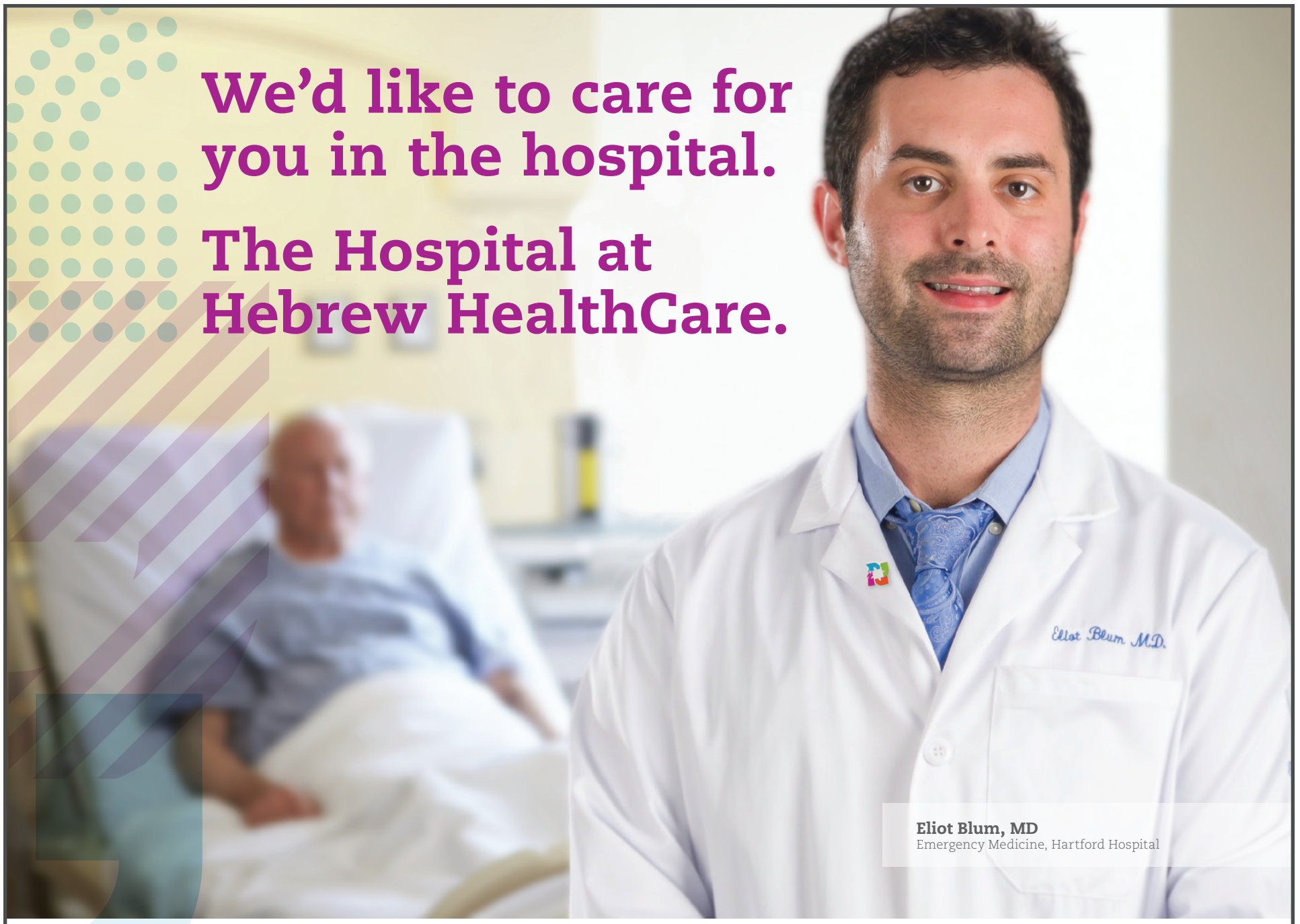

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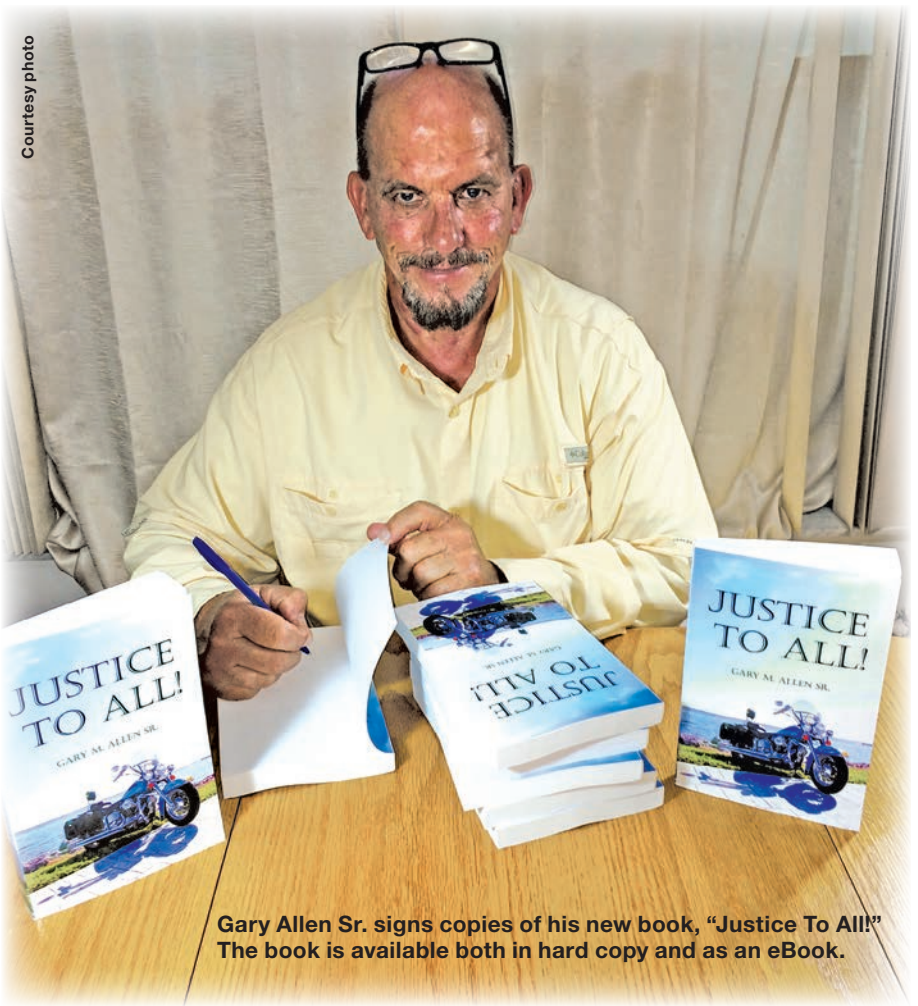

Gary Allen Sr. signs copies of his new book, "Justice To All!" The book is available both in hard copy and as an eBook.

Town native writes first novel

Gary Allen Sr. previously wrote a bartending book

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Tim Ripple might be a fictional character, but those close to Gary Allen Sr. might recognize a little of the author in his new mystery, "Justice To All!"

"Some of it was about me," admitted Allen, who grew up in Rocky Hill and is now living in Florida.

"I've been writing it off and on for almost four years. I would start it, I would stop it because I'd need more money and have to have a part-time job. That took a lot of time away from writing."

The story has long been brewing in Allen's mind.

"I had a good idea of what I wanted to write about. Some of it, I might have done it," he said cryptically, noting that he fictionalized those experiences.

"It's just something I always wanted to do. I always wanted to write this mystery. I just love mysteries."

He especially enjoys the work of John Grisham and James Patterson.

"I enjoyed writing about it and I got into a lot of detail. I love detail. This way they know where Tim came from and how he was in the

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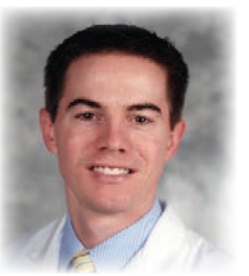
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story, how certain people he met with helped them out in life," he said.

"Detail was my thing in the book. I made it where the characters are regular people. Some people are so nice, some people are grumpy," he added.

Allen moved to town as a child while in the third grade, attending schools here through high school.

"I lived here most of my life. I grew up here, I have friends here," he said.

His family includes four sisters and three brothers.

He's the son of Pauline Allen, who was on the Town Council as well as working in real estate, and Charles Allen, who retired from the Hartford Police Department. They both were creative, with Pauline having written a book of poetry and Charles creating Christmas wreaths.

"We used to go around the neighborhood and sell the wreaths to neighbors," Gary Allen remembered.

"Then they opened Century Florist & Gifts from scratch. They just took a chance and did it for many, many, many years. I believe it was the second or third store that was open in that plaza; that was way back when."

He explored many jobs on the way to becoming a mystery book author, including working in the chimney business and driving a Connecticut Transit bus.

"I always wanted to write this mystery. I just love mysteries."

–Gary Allen Sr.

"I went to bartending school and I really enjoyed it," he said.

In addition to bartending at places such as the Ramada Inn in Windsor Locks, Trinity College and the Hastings Hotel in Hartford, and serving as bar manager at the Town Farms Inn in Middletown, he taught bartending at Middlesex Community College.

"Everyone had their own bar," he said of the 10 students who would be in each class.

That experience led him to write his first book, "Learn How To Bartend," which came out in 1999.

"There was nothing on the market on learning how to bartend," he said. "I took some pictures and my book explains [what to do] if you're setting up for a wedding, if you're setting up for somebody's birthday party. It's step-by-step to learn how to bartend, to learn or refresh."

There's a chapter on free pouring, as well as a chapter on how to make more tips.

"The tips chapter is actually worth the [cost of the] whole book," he said.

He added that dinners where people are wearing name tags offer a great opportunity to maximize tips.

"Start calling people by name. When they're getting low on a drink, say, 'George, would like another drink?' Get real personal," he said.

If you're at an event such as a wedding where people aren't wearing name tags, he recommends listening to conversations when people are hanging out at the bar. You'll overhear someone's name, which you can then use to sell drinks and increase tips.

Say, "Joe, can I get you another bourbon?" Allen suggested. "Know the people you're serving and joke with them."

He also used to have his own "wedding drink."

"People were tipping left and right. That was a big smash back then," he said.

Allen often balanced two or three jobs, including driving for an oil company, as well as bartending through a temp service.

"As I got older, I got out of bartending. I got tired of it and wanted to do something else,

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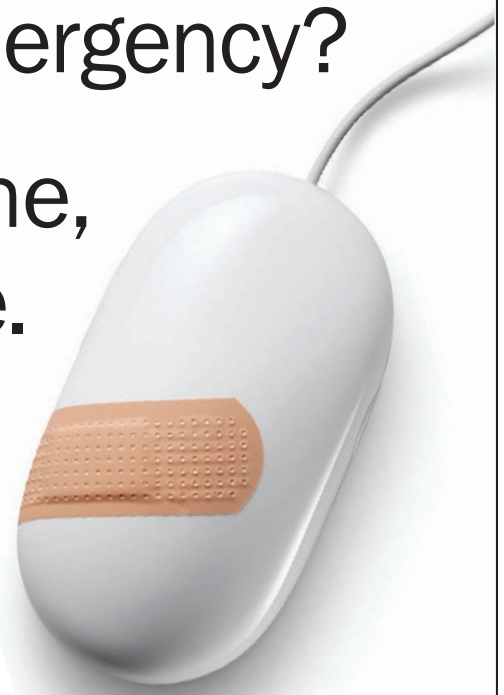

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so I moved on," he said.

While he self-published his first book, he had an idea for another one that he wanted to sell. The concept was a book about the size of a pack of cigarettes that someone could reference with recipes for making drinks.

"You can always put it in a pocket or pocketbook, and if you're not sure of something, you can go through it. You can do it today with a phone. Back then, we didn't have [smart] phones," he said. "You could market to students. You could market to cruise ships."

The project never panned out. After losing his job at the oil company, Allen moved to Florida on Aug. 1, 2000.

"I took a chance. I didn't have any jobs," he said.

He's now living in Sebastian, in the middle of Florida on the east coast between Melbourne and Vero Beach, working for the city. He found a routine that helped his writing process.

"I would write on weekends. I would start at 5 in the morning. I would have my coffee. When my wife [Gloria] got up, we would go to the local bookstore. She would do her reading; I would do my writing.

"Sunday, I would continue writing. Tuesday night, when I'd get home from work, I would do a little writing. If I'm coming home from work, I would always be thinking about what I wrote the night before. My mind is always rolling all the time, how to wrap this chapter up, should I make the character this way or that way," he said.

"Early morning would be the best time that I prefer writing. I'm awake. I have my coffee and I would go to town with that," added Allen, who credited his wife for her support throughout the process.

"I would throw out an idea about one of the characters and ask her what she thought of it. My wife was very helpful."

Friends back in Rocky Hill, such as Elaine Somes, are excited to see his book come to fruition.

"Gary and his family [were] wonderful neighbors. [They] lived across the street from me growing up in Rocky Hill. He was a good friend of one of my brothers. We reconnected recently after my brother's passing," Somes said.

"He spoke of this book he had written and I was quite curious, as I enjoy writing – poetry is my thing – as well. I knew about and purchased his earlier bartending books, even though I do not drink, as it's just fun knowing the author," she added.

"Gary has always been, and remains, a fun-loving, full-of-life, easy-going guy. Reconnecting with him after so many years is a blessing. It is a joy to see Gary actually make a dream of his come true in writing 'Justice To All!'"

The book is available in both paperback and eBook formats on Amazon and other online retailers. He has big hopes for it.

"I'm hoping – and this is a long shot, like anything else in life, if it happens, it happens – is to get a movie out of my book. I'm going to send copies to producers and see if anyone is interested in it," Allen said.

He's also at work on a sequel to the novel. **RHL**

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Business notes

Ashley Lang, one of the veteran financial advisors at **Kuttin-Metis,** was named partner in charge of the practice's Rocky Hill branch. She will divide her time between the company's Long Island headquarters and the Connecticut office.

Two Men and a Truck wrapped up 2015 with the conclusion of its Movers for Military fall campaign. The moving company collected donations of furniture and other needed items for veterans and delivered some of the items to South Park Inn in Hartford for distribution to veterans in need. The franchise doubled the size of its Rocky Hill fleet this past year and opened an additional office in Avon. It also provided free and discounted moves to 10 Connecticut non-profit organizations.

The Atrium at Rocky Hill won the 2015 Best Practices in Resident Care Award from the Connecticut Assisted Living Association. The facility was honored for delivering resident-centered programs in memory care.

CBRE/NE has negotiated the sale of the I-91 Tech Center, a five-building office park along the interstate highway in Rocky Hill. The 110,000-square-foot facility was acquired by the local private equity firm Capstone Properties for $12.2 million.

Two Men and a Truck

Grove Hill Medical Centers, P.C., and **Connecticut Multispecialty Group, P.C.,** merged, effective Jan. 1. The new entity is called **Starling Physicians**. A company official said this will create the largest physician-owned, fully integrated multispecialty medical practice in central Connecticut. **RHL**

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McGivney & Kluger, P.C. is proud to announce that Morris R. Borea has joined the firm as a Partner and Trial Counsel in McGivney and Kluger's Hartford, CT office.

Well known to the Connecticut Bar, Mr. Borea is an accomplished trial lawyer who has represented both plaintiffs and defendants in numerous trials before juries in State and Federal Courts in Connecticut, including product liability, medical malpractice and wrongful death claims. He has also tried many bench trials before State and Federal Court judges in Connecticut, including employment claims, unfair trade practice claims and commercial tax appeals. Mr. Borea is also a seasoned municipal lawyer, having represented cities and towns in central Connecticut for over 15 years. In 2015, Mr. Borea was lead counsel for the Town of Rocky Hill in the landmark *SecureCare v. Rocky Hill* case, where the Connecticut Supreme Court recognized a municipality's right to enforce its zoning regulations against, and collect taxes from, quasi-public entities doing business with the State.

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Photo by Mara Dresner

Joe Rotundo purchased Lori Catania's salon and opened the new Hot Heads Salon, where Catania still works.

After decades in California and Florida, stylist returns home to buy a salon

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

It's been a circuitous road, but hair stylist Joe Rotundo is home again. A Wethersfield native, Rotundo got his start at Gervacio's Hair Salon on Constitution Plaza in Hartford.

He moved to Newport Beach, California, where he stayed for 15 years, training with Michael O'Rourke of Sexy Hair, before settling in West Palm Beach, Florida, where he's been for the past 25 years.

"Throughout, doing hair has been my passion," said Rotundo, who owned his own salon in Florida for about 18 years and decided it was time to come back to Connecticut.

"It was something that just came over us. My mom had passed away. It was just time to move from West Palm Beach. It has changed a lot. All doors opened for us to come here."

One of those opportunities was purchasing a salon in Rocky Hill. Rotundo opened Hot Heads Salon, having purchased the former Elegant Image from Lori Catania, who continues to work with the business.

"I had been eyeballing this space for many years," Rotundo said.

"I just fell in love with the area again. I've been gone for 40-something years. Sometimes you have to travel around to really see what you have. I'm so glad to be back in Rocky Hill."

Things happened quickly.

"When I found out this was available, I had four weeks to sell my salon in Florida, to sell my house," he said. "I feel blessed to be in here with Lori. When I came in, we just connected. She believed in me and I believed in her."

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"I prayed someone great would come and that's what happened. I just was ready to step back from being a business owner, but not from the hairdressing industry itself," Catania said.

Rotundo is focusing on using organic products, although he also carries a couple of other lines that people request.

"I have a passion for organics," he said.

He is concerned about product ingredients, such as keratin relaxers.

"There's formaldehyde in there. That's what they embalm people in. Do I want to inhale that, really? Do I want my client to inhale that?"

He added that even a good ventilation system isn't enough. That doesn't mean he's compromising on quality with his products, such as hair color.

"This color is just phenomenal. I love my color. I love what's good for you. There's nothing in there to hurt you," he said. "It's double-pigmented, so it gives you the shine, it gives you what you need, and it lasts longer than traditional hair color."

add to the staff, they will be careful when hiring.

"Hairstylists are one of the very few businesses where we touch people. We touch their lives in a lot of different ways. We're good listeners. We hear about their day-to-day encounters in life. It's not just about the hair," Catania said.

"We love the people. We care about the people who come. We want them to feel it's a home, a place they can trust us."

"We're here for the long run. We're very, very picky as far as who we're going to let into the salon," Rotundo added.

He noted that ongoing training is important.

"So many people are in the business for 30 years, yet they have not attended a show. They have not stayed updated on changes in industry. When you think you know everything, it's time to hang up your scissors."

Rotundo also believes in giving back to the community. Soon after Hot Heads opened, they held a cut-a-thon to benefit a young man who became paralyzed from a car accident.

Sometimes you have to travel around to really see what you have. I'm so glad to be back in Rocky Hill."

–Joe Rotundo

Both he and Catania are excited about their new partnership.

"Joe and I bring a lot of experience and expertise and professionalism. Joe is amazing at hair color. [He's] like a chemist," said Catania, who had her salon for 18 years.

"It's really wonderful to have somebody as professional and experienced and with as much knowledge come and take over."

She trusts Rotundo to do her own hair.

"Joe makes people feel good. He did my hair. I love the way he did it. I love the color, I love the hairstyle, love the highlights he put in. He's excellent in what he does. Anyone who has Joe do their hair, they never leave him. He has such a rapport with people," she said.

"I don't know if addicting is the word, but you don't want to leave, you just want to stay," she added. "To watch him work is like watching a platform artist. It's fun to watch Joe do hair. I'm just in awe to watch Joe work."

While they plan to eventually

The salon offers services for men and women, and accepts walk-ins, as well as appointments.

Erin Weyant of Rocky Hill has been going to Catania for three years.

"It's very clean, inviting. I like the changes Joe has made from the colors to the decorations. It's different, but still familiar," Weyant said.

"I never used to let anybody touch my hair. I used to cut and color my hair myself. [Lori's] just an expert. She's great at listening to what you want and giving advice, but not in a pushy sort of way.

"She's very friendly. You feel like you're sitting with a girlfriend getting your hair done. She always done a fantastic job."

As the business couple looks toward the new year, Rotundo is glad to be back in Connecticut.

"I just love this business, I just love this business," he said. "I just feel blessed." **RHL**

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Helping people get healthy

Chiropractor opens a new office in his hometown

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

When Dr. Mark Chudy was a child, he hurt himself playing basketball.

"I was injured when I was a little kid. I went diving for a ball. I couldn't even move. I went through a lot of other therapies. They were talking about surgery," Chudy said.

He was born in Poland, coming to the United States when he was 2 years old. His family lived in Hartford for several years before settling in Rocky Hill.

Eventually, he was taken to a chiropractor, who helped him heal. While that event may have planted the seed, the road to becoming a chiropractor himself was anything but straightforward for Chudy, who recently opened an office in town.

He earned a bachelor of business administration from Georgia Southern University and became an accountant, a field he stayed in for about eight years. He didn't much like it.

"I was really unhappy. I was at Rose Hill Cemetery one day at my mother's grave and she said, 'Mark, go to chiropractor school.' I started classes right after that," he recalled.

Chudy earned his doctorate of chiropractic from Life Chiropractic University in Marietta, Georgia.

"That school had a phenomenal philosophy of chiropractic. Every school has its own philosophy. Some are very medical. They were very holistic; they looked at the whole body. That was very appealing to me," said Chudy.

He knew he would return to the area to practice because of family and friends.

"I always wanted to be back here and be able to work with that community where I grew up," he said.

He worked at Carbone Chiropractic in Wethersfield for 16 years before deciding to open Chudy Chiropractic Center.

"It was a natural progression to do my own thing. It's been great ever since," he said. "I've been working around the construction."

Photo by Mara Dresner

Dr. Mark Chudy recently opened a new office in Rocky Hill. He makes a point of dressing casually and designed his office so it doesn't have a clinical feel.

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His new offices are designed to not look clinical. He is hoping to bring on other professionals to provide complementary services, such as an acupuncturist, naturopath and Reiki specialist. He expects to add services during the winter.

"I don't want to just find people. I want to make sure they're the right people [who fit with] my philosophy, with the peaceful energy of what we're trying to do here," he said.

Chudy believes that the body has a great ability to heal itself.

"A lot of us have forgotten we can heal. If the body has cut ourselves, we can heal. We don't need surgery right away; we don't need drugs right away. We can heal if you allow the body not to be under stress and give it the opportunity to heal itself," he said.

"Sometimes, it's gotten so out of alignment, so out of balance, that the system needs chiropractic, it needs massage. Nutrition is so important. Mindset is so important, how we think every day. I think people have lost that thought that we have everything we need within us to heal," he added.

Chudy has adjusted everyone from young children to people in their 90s.

"Everyone gets adjusted differently. Everybody has a custom adjustment, a custom visit, whatever they need, whatever their body is ready for that day," he said.

Chudy, who is eligible for a diplomate in neurology, has a special interest in working with children with learning disabilities. It started about 10 years ago when he took a seminar from a chiropractic neurologist, which led to his taking a three-year program.

"That showed me how chiropractic can neurologically affect a kid. It's amazing," he said. "If we can make the brain function at its best, it's going to give that kid the best opportunity to learn and study and do the best in class."

He has worked with children with diagnoses such as dyslexia, attention-deficit disorder and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

He said that often what's taking place in our bodies had its beginnings years earlier, perhaps dating back to childhood.

"Why would a little kid need it? A kid is falling down 100 times a day [when learning to walk]. That can't be good for his spine. It's just like a tree grows crooked from the beginning. If you start with a body a little out of alignment, you go through life that way. If you have enough years that way, that's where pain starts to happen, that's where disease starts to happen," he said.

"Remember when we were kids, our parents always told us to sit up straight, sit up straight, sit up straight? Our parents knew our posture affects our spine and it affects our health."

Chiropractic looks at the structure of the body.

"If the spine is out of alignment, the brain and body can't talk to each other appropriately, and over time it will break down. That's what we evaluate. We evaluate the posture and the spine. It's just like a dashboard in a car. That's what the neurology program taught us is to be really good at reading the

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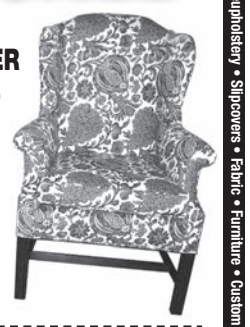

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dashboard. It's just like a mechanic," Chudy said.

"When you remove the interference between the brain and the body, the body has the opportunity to heal itself. It's not that we treat a lot of different things, but things heal as the body works better."

That doesn't mean that one should only go to the chiropractor if one is sick or in pain.

"That's like saying if you don't have pain, you don't need a dentist," he said.

In addition to his private practice, Chudy is the on-call chiropractor for performers at the XL Center, XFINITY Theatre and the Oakdale Theatre, which he's done for about 13 years.

"I probably do 30 shows a year, maybe 40. They have the same bodies and same stresses; they're people just like all of us. They're on the road, they practice, they're on buses, they don't sleep in great beds, they don't get great rest. Their bodies break down just like ours," said Chudy.

He has worked on everyone from country stars to rap stars to legendary performers.

"I try not to look star-struck, but I still am all these years."

That doesn't mean that his celebrity patients are more important. He's excited about his new space including its design.

"I want it to be a feeling like everything is going to be OK, we've got this under control."

–Dr. Mark Chudy

"I specifically didn't want it to look like a clinical setting," said Chudy, who dresses casually. "That's the way I want to be treated. I want it to be a feeling like everything is going to be OK, we've got this under control."

He's also flexible about the hours that he sees patients.

"I'm open really early. I like catching people before they go to work. I'll be there a few days a week by 7," he said.

"There's nothing worse than getting to the office and trying to leave for an appointment. I want to catch people and de-stress them. It shouldn't be a stressful thing to get healthy," said Chudy, who lives a half mile from his new office.

Jen Festa drives to town twice a week from Terryville, a 45-minute ride. She started bringing her twin sons to Chudy in August. The boys, now 5, were 24 weeks premature when born.

"He's very knowledgeable. He really just has such a good bedside manner. It's a fight over who goes first. One son jumps right up on the table; he can't get the smile off his face. One son is delayed in all areas. I feel like he's made gains cognitively and in overall tone," Festa said.

"Mark's been a big part of the whole team working with our kids. He takes the time; they're never rushed. You can tell he loves what he does. It's been one of the pieces, I think, to my sons' growth, and something we hadn't tried before."

It's also become a family affair.

"It started out with just our sons going. Now I also go. My husband also goes, my father-in-law goes," she said. "He's phenomenal."

Chudy is hoping to connect with some of the schools in town, as well as with individual patients.

"I want to expose more and more people to chiropractic. It's important for me to be in the town where I grew up," he said. "I just want to help people get healthy." **RHL**

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Tops in the Classroom

The following students were named to the honor roll for the first quarter at Rocky Hill High School.

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High Honors

Haley Albano, Brett Arnold, Mitchell Aureli, Alexander Bondi, Matthew Bortolan, Peter Botticello, Alexander Bronk, Nicole Bruzik, Matthew Caesar, Mathew Callahan, Alexa Cannistraro, Alexa Cardillo, Gabriella Caron, Brooke Chao, Kevin Cormier, William Crafa, Patricia Czarnecki, Rachel D'Agostino, Jenna D'Angelo, Kyle Devine, Ashley Duarte, Sara Federici, Nathan Friday, Arianna Genovese, Sarah Gioia, Jessica Greenspan, Matthew Guiliano, Darla Holland, David Katz, Jonas Kuttikattu, Briana Lamari, Olivia Levine, Giuseppe Mattia, Frank McGee, Jeffrey Moise, Britany Moore, Madison Nastri, Ayobamii Oseni, Madison Palmer, Brandon Phenix, Sierra Pizzoferrato, Christopher Pratt, Timothy Rhouddou, Jenna Sanzo, Antonina Scata, Alison Simboski, Julianne Slavin, Eric Slowik, Victoria Spellman, Jared Sullivan, Steven Tomastik, Lindsay Varney, Adam Vassallo, Victoria Veneziano, Trevor Whalen and Emily Zebrowski.

Grade 11

High Honors

Brian Blakeslee, Dante Carlone, Vincent Cassarino, Mark Catania, Alicia Dabek, Justin Donofrio, Shannon Duffy, Ben Famiglietti, Zykeya Ford, Anthony Fortes, Jacob Franzen, Michelino Gali, Melissa Gamonal, Allison Grover, Andrew Guyette, Erin Hourihan, Erin Kelly, Fotos Kroji, Cristina LoGiudice, Emily Louro, JoDee Lupacchino,, Julia Machaj, Kristina Machaj, Robert Machaj, Tatyana Martinez, Amanda Mitchell, Ricky Montalvo, Arianna Morabito, Bailey O'Connell, Austin Pavele, Amber Rehman, Sarina Santos, David Scalise, Nicole Shank, Alexander Sikorski, Montserrat Sousa-Sanchez, Brianna St. Georges, Caroline Sullivan, Joseph Sullivan, Jason Vailionis, Gabriel Walerysiak and Joseph Young.

Grade 10

High Honors

Victoria Acca, Marisa Anderson, Andrew Barber, Alexander Benson, Brendan Boyle, Emma Brownstein, Ashley Cannata, Christian Castanho, Dillon Cerpa, Nicole Chamberland, Shelby Cios, Kristen Costello, Andrew DiMatteo, Thomas DiMatteo, Matthew Emmanuel, Sarah Erkson, Christian Federici, Torah Ferrebee, Joseph Ferreira, Alexandra Fishberg, Cole Fishberg, Grace Fisher, Jared Friday, Gino Giansanti, Arian Gokhale, Elena Goodman, Katrina Granovskiy, Michael Griswold, Zirui Hao, Melanie Holmes, Madison Hussey, Sana Kasmani, Sophie Kurdziel, Matthew Lanciotto, Grace Lang, Rachel Longo, Jonathan Lu, Megan Mahoney, Ioannis Mastorakis, Christiana Montalbano, Grace Moore, Madelyn Morse, Sujith Nakkala, Eesha Nasir, Sonalia Neemcharan, Nathaniel Nicholson, Bree O'Connor, Matthew Osgood, Colin Pavel, Szymon Ptak, Brigid Schulenburg, Reva Shah, Dion Sherman, Brian Speers, Samantha Steinman, Kayla Sullivan, Joseph Twigg, John Woolley, Emily Zarrilli, Wiktoria Zduniak and Scott Zebrowski.

Grade 9

High Honors

Pavan Adapa, Anthony Albano, Colin Amo, Aviana Baho, Tomasz Baliga, Gulnaz Bhura, Jordyn Bowler, Gabriela Brown, Adam Buerk, Thien-Kim Bui, Meagan Caesar, Daniella Castanho, Sharanya Chandu, Adam Chao, Alisha Chhabra, Daniel Cho, Chloe Colandrea, Andre Costa, Megan Creevy, Viviana Delgado, Connor Devanney, Lilah Devine, Julia DiBattista, Victoria DiLoreto, Nesla Disha, Katarzyna Drozdzal, Morgan Felice, Ryan Figueiredo, Elliot Gamelin, Nathan Gerace-Hicks, Romeo Gjuzi, Mihir Gowda, Lea Grant, Alexandra Gwara, Melissa Hiller, Brett Kiesel, Maya Kugel, Pranjali Kulkarni, Alexandra Lopez, Benjamin Lukens, Nicole Lukens, Miguel Madera, Francis Malabanan, Marissa Martin, Kate Masciadrelli, Taylor McLean, Marina Merriman, Emma Molloy, Alyssa Morabito, Pulkit Nagpal, Julia O'Connor, Patrick Ostrowski, Alexandra Parks, Prem Patel, Lauren Pattison, Aaron Pavelec, Haley Pavelec, Molly Pawlak, Griffin Pickett, Logan Prentiss, Angelika Ptak, Jaharra Roberts, Julia Rosa, Nijaz Salihovic, Ashley Scacca, Amanda Schuman, Ayla Schumann, Sarah Simard, Christa Tucker, Sophie Twigg, Christian Uccello, Karalina Valente, Venanzio Weeks, Anne White and Kellie Williams.

Grade 12

Academic Honors

Kalterina Balaj, Abigale Barnes, Abigail Bellizzi, Rosario Bourdier, Joshua Brouillard, Tyler Casey, Alexander Castanho, Emina Cecunjanin, Jenna Chipkin, Elizabeth Coler, Jovan Colon, Devin Cranmer, Michal Drozdzal, Alexis Emmanuel, Joshua Evardone, Kyle Faber, Andrea Feron, Rebecca Ford, Sara Golemi, Morgan Guerra, Amy Hafner, Timothy Halligan, Sarah Haze, Justin Hewitt, Daniel Janikowski, Emma Jennings, Arkid Koni, Michael LaPorte, Kevin Larkin, Ryan Lombardo, Almedina Mirica, Matthew Molloy, Emily Pentland, Caitlin Perkins, James Presutti, Kelly Quirion, Brooke Race, Alexys Rinaldi, Megan Ritchie, Brooke Robinson, Nicholas Santos, James Sekorski, Julia Sevigny, Abigail Smith, Caroline Spada, Madison Stabile, Emma Stevens, Patrick Sullivan, Julianne Tefoe, Wilnely Urena, Kassandra Veneziano, Goncalo Vieira, Summer Vinci and Emily Zaller.

Grade 11

Academic Honors

Aliyan Ahmed, Allison Allegretti, Kristopher Begen, Taylor Bowler, Janessa Bergenholtz, Samantha Brady, Nam Bui, Vanessa Cardillo, Nicholas Casiano, Patrick Cella, Jay Chandran, Cameron Cheyney, Peter Cimini, Isabella Colasacco, Kathleen Conlan, Timothy Davis, Luke Devine, Matthew DiBattista, Kaitlin Dillon, Nicolas Garry-Benco, Evan Gauvin, Jordan Greco, Hunter Held, Justin Hock, Nico Karabetsos, Dario Kokic, Madeline Kovanda, Peter Lucente, Ashley Macca, Salvatore Madera, Despina Merriman, Joseph Monaco, Ryan Nicola, Grant Nieves, Jusuf Nukic, Isabella Olmstead, Analysia Ortiz, Prarthana Patel, Kaley Paulino, Anthony Pietrandrea, James Pitchell, Ariana Ramos, Frankie Roberts, Alana Rychlec, Stephanie Sampaio, Anthony Sapia-Banas, Kajal Shah, Renato Silva, Michael Simons, Allison Skultety, Katherine Sullivan, Jake Walling, Christopher Witowski and Ryan Wolf.

Grade 10

Academic Hours

Sydney Aberbach, Victoria Bower, Sabrina Capasso, Daniel Cavallaro, Adan Cecunjanin, Elizabeth DeNardo, Haley Doll, Jason Donofrio, Michelle Dougherty, Julia Fazzina, Anthony Gaetano, Gina Genovese, Salvatore Gentile, Daniel Goslin, Anna Grant, Isabella Hassan, Eesha Irfan, Marc LaPuma, Andrew Levine, Adelina Miceli, Kevin Moise, Tyler Morgan, Jason Oostendorp, Kruti Patel, Henry Patterson, Brianna Place, Melissa Rambharose, Ryan Robinson, Samantha Rogala, Seyed-Arash Safavi, Madison Santo, Kyle Sanzo, Riley Shannahan, Russell Sheathelm, Sabrina Sokaitis, Abigail Stock, Benjamin Stock, Thalia Taffe, Jonathan Tefoe, Melanie Tejeda, Crystal Vinci, Seth Walerysiak, Dylan Walsh, Jacob Weber, William White and TingTing Zhang.

Grade 9

Academic Honors

Hailey Anderson, Hajrija Avdibasic, John Blair, Daniel Calafiore, Isabella Calafiore, Rachel Calcagni, Anel Cecunjanin, Anes Cecunjanin, Arijan Cekic, Christopher Conlan, Victoria Czubat, Christian D'Eliseo, Morgan DeCarlo, Alexander DesRoches, Dominic DiBlasi, Gianna DiMatteo, Riley Donovan, Michelle Galdamez, Nathan Gariepy, John Gogo, Michael Guerra, Peter Harding, Olena Herasym, Charles Hilton, David Hofmann, James Huddleston, Yesmine Jlidi, Andre Johnson, Zafeer Kolia, Hunter Layton, Kelsey Lopez, Emily McInnish, Sarah Mitchell, Alexa Morin, Ayush Patel, Jillian Peckham, Skyler Pitchell, Hunter Poliquin, Deanna Prescott, Anna Riedinger, Robert Rosa, Spencer Shepard, Anthony Simko, Thomas Slavin, Lillian Spada, Brenna Sweeney, Alex Tordonato, Liliana Trujillo, Isabella Vassallo, Loriana Veneziano and Arianna Weaver. RHL

Student of the month

Superintendent Award co-winner likes writing and helping others

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

When 11-year-old Toriana Grooms sets her mind to something, she will do anything to achieve it.

The fifth-grader proved herself this year when she was one of two students to win the CAPSS Superintendent Award at West Hill School. Her fellow winner, Robert Gwara, was featured in the November edition of Rocky Hill LIFE.

Earning this recognition was a goal Toriana had for more than a year.

"Each year we do a Flag Day ceremony where we acknowledge students who got awards that year," Principal Scott Nozik said.

"After last year's assembly, Toriana said, 'I want to get that award. How do I do it?' She said it to one of the secretaries, unbeknownst to us, and now a year later, here she is.

"We had no idea until after the fact that this was something that she was shooting for, which is remarkable," he added.

The CAPSS Superintendent Award recognizes two fifth grade students per school each year for their community service and service to others, academic prowess and leadership service to the school community. When Toriana learned about the award this past year, she immediately knew she wanted to earn it.

"The Superintendent's Award is one of the biggest awards in the fifth grade, and I generally have pretty big goals," she said in a matter of fact tone. "The bigger the challenge,

Fifth grader Toriana Grooms was one of two students recognized as West Hill's CAPSS Superintendent Award winner, a goal which she set for herself last year.

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the bigger the reward."

She learned that she and Robert had earned the recognition in November when they were called to Nozik's office.

"I got really nervous because I thought I got in trouble," she said.

After learning the real reason she was pulled out of class, Toriana decided to have a little fun of her own.

"Mr. Nozik let me call my mom," she said with a laugh. "At first, I said, 'Mom, I'm in the principal's office and I have to tell you something,' and she got really nervous."

After telling her parents about the award, she said they were extremely proud of her.

Toriana is recognized by her teachers for her commitment to her schoolwork and dedication to helping others. Her favorite subjects are language arts and math, but being able to write stories is her favorite part of the day.

"I like realistic fiction, or any kind of fiction, really," she said. "In fiction, you can do whatever you want with it. Nonfiction is also amazing, but it has to be real. In fiction, you can do anything."

Toriana's love of writing enabled her to participate in National Novel Writing Month in Angela Jones's language arts class back in November. She wrote a story called "Caged," which ended up being more than 6,200 words about a young girl's quest to save an abused elephant and reunite it with her mother.

"The bigger the challenge, the bigger the reward."
– Toriana Grooms

"My favorite animal ever would be elephants, and not all elephants are treated properly," she said of her story's inspiration. "I once saw an elephant that had a lot of scars and I felt sad, so I came up with all the things I would do to rescue an elephant."

She plays clarinet in the concert band, a shift from her experience playing the piano since the age of 5.

"I decided it was time for something new," she said.

Toriana also tried playing the viola for a year, but the instrument wasn't for her. She's happy to now be playing clarinet as well as keeping up with the piano, because she has a general love for music.

"The best part about making music is that it comes in all different sounds," she said. "It can be happy or angry or sad. To me, music is like its own story."

In addition to her musical talents, she is also an athlete and participates in competitive swimming.

"I started swimming when I was 6 months old and started competitive swimming in the second grade," she said.

As of this year, Toriana swims with LeHigh Swimming in East Hartford. Her favorite stroke is the butterfly.

"I like it because it's hard," she said. "When you're swimming, it feels like you're flying underwater."

Getting to help others is the most important part of her life and she strives every day to be a role model for her younger sister, Nala, who is in kindergarten at West Hill.

"I love helping people because I know there are people out there who have less than me and my parents taught me that," Toriana said.

She hopes to compete in the school's Invention Convention later this year to create something that will help people.

"I have a few ideas for this year," she said. "I want to help people who are hungry. There are lots of good things that could help people. The problem is deciding which one I want to try."

"She's really an impressive kid," Nozik said. **RHL**

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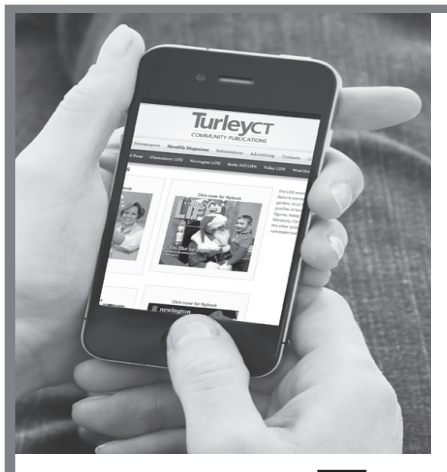

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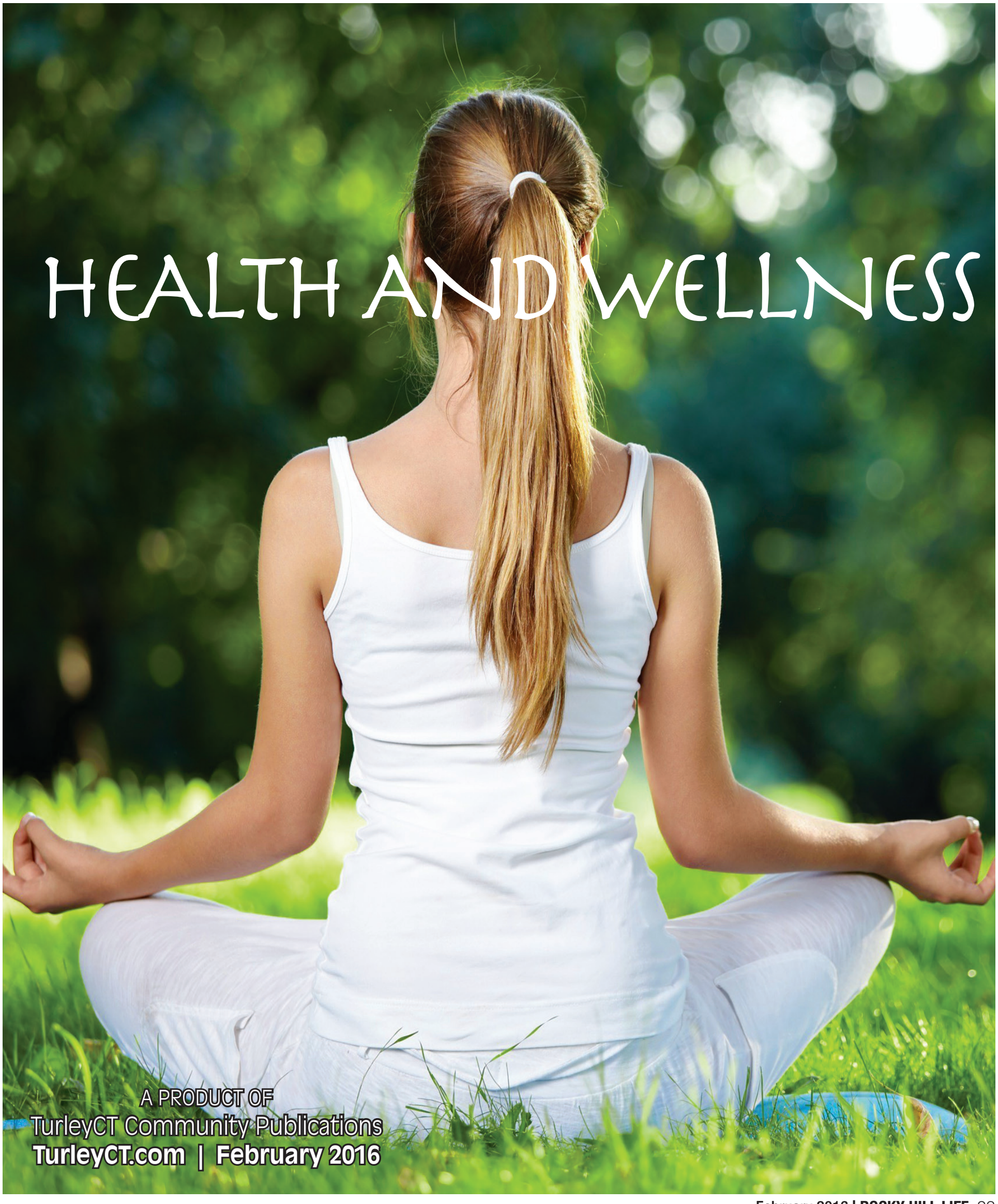
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Kerri Abronzino

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Dr. Ciarcia

Dr. Joseph Ciarcia is a lifelong resident of Wethersfield. He received his bachelor's degree in pathobiology from the University of Connecticut and his dental degree from the University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine in 1990. Dr. Ciarcia returned to Connecticut after completing his one-year residency at Denver General Hospital in Denver, Colorado. Dr. Ciarcia and his wife Linda have two daughters, Alana and Natalie. When Dr. Ciarcia is not at work, he enjoys spending time with his family and playing with Dallas, his boxer/shepherd dog whom he adores. He also loves traveling, spending time at the beach and is a great cook!

Dr. Fusco

Dr. Dominic L. Fusco III was raised in Wethersfield and now resides in Marlborough with his wife Dawn and their three children, Madison, Dylana and Dj. He received his bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Connecticut and his Doctorate of Dental Medicine from Tufts University in 1988. When Dr. Fusco is not working, he enjoys spending time with his family, taking his son to hockey games and fishing. He also loves music!

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Have a heart

Locals bounce back from health scares

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Sometimes major health events come out of the blue. Other times, the symptoms have been building for years, but we don't always know that they're a disaster in the making. These area residents have all faced major heart issues and are doing great on the other side. In honor of American Heart Month, they've shared their stories.

Name: Michael Fox
Age: 71
Hometown: Newington
Occupation: retired
Success story:
A couple years before the surgery, I was having problems catching my breath. I usually use the VA. They've been very good to me. Cardiology checked it out; they had gastroenterology check it out; the lung people. There wasn't really anything wrong. I had an angiogram a few years ago. There was some blockage but not enough to do anything about it. A year or so passed and this keeps going on and on.

On Oct. 12, Columbus Day, I take my regular bath, I read the paper, I'm having chest pain. It's the holiday. The VA here is closed. I decided to take an ambulance to Saint Francis. I'm glad I did.

They keep me overnight and say they're going to give me a nuclear stress test tomorrow, which is

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Health & *Wellness*

Tuesday. I take the nuclear stress test, and they say they need to do an angiogram. By Friday, after all the rigmarole, at 8 a.m., I'm in the operating room having double bypass. I had three blocked arteries, but I didn't have enough blood vessels to do all three.

After the surgery, I spent a couple of days at the hospital. Then I went to Jefferson House here in Newington for rehabilitation. I spent almost a week there. I'm home and scheduled for cardiac rehab. It's a three-month program and, boy, am I glad I did it.

I'm feeling so good now. I go in three days a week for an hour. I do treadmill work, stationary bike work and free weights. I walk a couple of miles at home two, three, maybe five days a week. I used to walk five miles a day.

I started getting used to eating salad either with lunch or for lunch. For breakfast, I have a fruit smoothie with nonfat yogurt or 2 percent milk. I lost 20 pounds. I feel much better. I could go dancing every night now.

Name: Mary Lu Maturo
Age: 75
Hometown: Wethersfield
Occupation: retired
Success story:

I've never had heart problems; I've never had anything. I've never been to the hospital except to have babies. Last March when I went to bed at night and would lie on my side, I would feel my heart pounding and I'd feel a pressure behind my sternum. I told my doctor and he did a cardiogram and sent me to the hospital. They did more tests and I continued on.

I exercised at the senior center three times a week. I liked to walk with friends at the Wethersfield Green, but whenever I would start walking, I'd get that pressure behind my breast bone, so I started to just meet them for coffee after. I'd get out of breath, but not terribly. I could still go on with my normal routine.

Then in the summertime, it got more frequent. On Labor Day weekend, I went to close two umbrellas outside, one by the pool and one by the patio. I got so out of breath.

That had never happened and that frightened me.

I called my doctor and he said to go in for a cardiogram. There was a cancellation the next day. My doctor said, "We won't fool around." So, the following Wednesday, they did an angiogram. I figured everything would be fine. They told me I had 90 percent blockage in four arteries and I wouldn't be going home. It was done Friday morning on Sept. 11. I was in the hospital for about a week, then in Jefferson House.

I did really well there. Each week I felt better. I never had any pain to speak of. If I took a deep breath, it would hurt. I was all set to leave Jefferson House, when I got an infection in my leg, so I had to stay a little longer.

Now I feel great. I exercise three times a week at the hospital. Today, I signed up with the town's fitness room. I plan on walking on the treadmill. It makes me feel good, it makes my legs feel stronger. If I don't exercise, it makes it harder to go up the stairs. I don't use salt at all. I feel like I'm in my 50s again!

Name: Carolyn Levine
Age: 71
Hometown: West Hartford
Occupation: professional conservator and certified geriatric care manager
Success story:

My job was quite stressful and I had high blood pressure. I was on medication for it, but I was very active. I never saw this coming.

We were at a friend's house for the evening playing cards and there were 12 of us or so and I just didn't feel that great. We went home and I was getting into bed and I got a terrible pain in back of my neck. So, I laid down on the bed and my husband called the doctor, a friend of ours, and he said, "Give her five minutes and if it happens again, go to the emergency room."

That's what we did. That was the first sign of anything. That's probably when the aortic aneurysm dissected. I went into the emergency room at about 11 at night and they started

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Manage blood pressure
High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. When your blood pressure stays within healthy ranges, you reduce the strain on your heart, arteries and kidneys, which keeps you healthier longer.

Control cholesterol
High cholesterol contributes to plaque, which can clog arteries and lead to heart disease and stroke. When you control your cholesterol, you are giving your arteries their best chance to remain clear of blockages.

Reduce blood sugar
Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose (or blood sugar) that our bodies use for energy. Over time, high levels of blood sugar can damage your heart, kidneys, eyes and nerves.

Get active
Living an active life is one of the most rewarding gifts you can give yourself and those you love. Simply put, daily physical activity increases your length and quality of life.

Eat better
A healthy diet is one of your best weapons for fighting cardiovascular disease. When you eat a heart-healthy diet, you improve your chances for feeling good and staying healthy – for life!

Lose weight
When you shed extra fat and unnecessary pounds, you reduce the burden on your heart, lungs, blood vessels and skeleton. You give yourself the gift of active living, you lower your blood pressure and you help yourself feel better, too.

Stop smoking
Cigarette smokers have a higher risk of developing cardiovascular disease. If you smoke, quitting is the best thing you can do for your health.

doing all kinds of tests, but nothing was showing up. My husband finally went home at 4 or 5 in the morning. I said, "Go get my clothes and my cell phone. I'll be going home in the morning."

The thoracic surgeon and cardiologist were there looking over all the records and they said, "You know what? I have one more test to do and if it's what I think it is, she'll need to go right into surgery. Only 1 percent of people survive a dissected aortic aneurysm. Even if she does come out of surgery, she'll be compromised because of the lack of oxygen. She will not be the person you know." That's how they left it with my husband and adult son and daughter, and 13 hours later I came out of surgery.

While in cardiac intensive care, I was a code blue. I stopped breathing and they had to re-intubate me. By the third week, they put me in the step-down cardiac unit. I had no idea until I was ready to go to rehab what really happened to me. I went to Mount Sinai Rehab/Saint Francis, I think for 12 days. When I started rehab, I wasn't really walking well at all and I kept falling asleep. In the first exercise, I had to take soft alphabet blocks and put them in order and I had no idea how to do that.

I had always been doing water aerobics. When I was healed and after I had physical therapy in my home, I went back to the water aerobics. I didn't have the appetite that I used to. I'd lost probably 35 pounds during all of this. I just had no taste for anything except one friend would make me carrot soup and I loved that and chicken soup and that's what my diet was for a long time.

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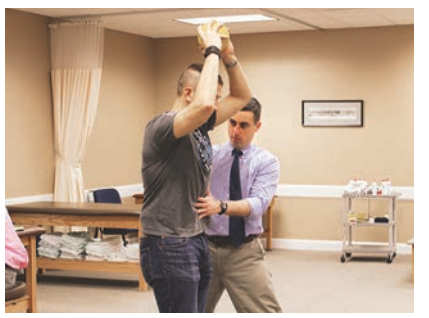

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I'm doing great! Except if I talk too much, I do start coughing because my nerves were damaged in my throat from all the intubation, so my voice has changed a little bit. I have some swallowing issues. Other than that, I am perfectly fine.

When I got home from rehab, I started calling my clients; they're all elderly and they knew something had happened to me. I would talk to them on the phone and finally, I started going to visit them. I'm working full time. I remember all my clients and all their stories and I just love them. It's a rebirth; it's a miracle. I wear a bracelet all the time that says "blessed."

Name: Bonnie Gearin
Age: 71
Hometown: Farmington
Occupation: retired first and second grade teacher
Success story:

My mom died at the age of 50. There are heart problems on both sides of my parents' families, so I had always been conscious of this.

I had the heart attack in February 2003. In September/October (2002), all of us that taught little ones caught bronchitis. Everyone got rid of it; mine just lingered. I kept going back to the doctor. I became such a pest. I kept saying, "Are you sure this is not heart-related?" He treated me for pneumonia, for bronchitis. He diagnosed me with asthma and gave me an inhaler.

I was at Our Lady of Calvary Retreat, which is probably four minutes away from UConn [Health]. On Sunday morning, I felt short of breath, so I used the inhaler, which was not a good thing to use. I went up to mass, and Sister Ann said, "You look as white as ghost. Do I need to call 911?" I did not even hesitate. I said yes. I can't give you a reason. I knew there was something big going on.

There were two retreatants that weekend who were not scheduled to be there, two doctors from Long Island. They immediately came out and felt it was heart-related. That was a gift that they were there.

I went to the emergency room and they did all the blood work they do. Dr. David Hager in the cardiology department just happened to be available. He said to me, "I would really like to keep you overnight." I needed to get a substitute teacher. I had all the paper goods for a teacher breakfast the next day. I asked if I could go home and come back. I was all dressed to go, and he said they were going to keep me overnight. At 4 in the morning, I had what they call "the widow maker." The only reason I survived was I was already in the hospital; I was already in the cardiac unit.

Dr. Hager happened to have stayed in the hospital because he was there within seconds. Women need to know you might have a heart attack and not even know it. I was going to get a T-shirt that said, "I had a heart attack and I never even had a pain."

Dr. Hager put a stent in to open an artery that was 100 percent blocked and another was 75 or 80 percent blocked. UConn cardiology is absolutely phenomenal. That's a good part of the reason I made such a healthy comeback. The care was outstanding.

I was in the hospital five days. I did go back to work. I made exercise a definite part of my day, and I shed some pounds. I did change my lifestyle. I was working on my master's at the same time. I was going to school, coping with teenagers, teaching, my eating habits were probably the worst. Burger King was where I stopped on the way home.

I see a physician's assistant every three or four months just to keep tabs on things. I exercise; I really try to adhere to the Mediterranean diet as close as possible. I feel great.

The last time I was at a cardiology appointment, the doctor told me if I saw a doctor who did not know I'd had a heart attack, that doctor would not be able to pick it up by listening to my heart. That heart attack did a lot of damage to my heart.

The fact I'm not exhibiting any evidence of having a heart attack, all in all, I think it's a pretty miraculous experience. **RHL**

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Finding *balance*

Experts offer thoughts on different approaches to wellness

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Whether the body is in pain that needs to be addressed or one seeks to develop a better mind and body connection, there are different ways to approach overall health and to give the body what it needs.

Physical Therapy

Eric Milman, co-owner of the Physical Therapy Center of Rocky Hill, said he takes a slightly different approach to wellness than other physical therapists.

"Our philosophy is a little bit outside of the box of most physical therapists," he said. "We really try to figure out what mechanism is causing the pain."

Milman compared the view he and his partner, John Paholski, take on taking care of their bodies to car maintenance.

"It's like taking your car in for an inspection," he explained. "You want to find out what may lead to a break down in the future."

By looking at the whole body, and not only the part that is in pain, Milman said he can help to treat the ailment more efficiently and with long effects.

"Take for example if someone comes in with shoulder pain," he said. "It could be that your spine isn't flexible enough, so when you reach up for things you feel it in your shoulder."

By looking for the causes of pain throughout the entire body, Milman said he and his partner can work to erase pain and not just manage it.

"If your car is leaking oil, you can keep adding oil to it, but it hasn't changed the leak," he said.

At his practice, Milman said that each patient is looked at individually and has a program specifically developed for them.

All appointments are one-on-one, with the physical therapist allowing the professional to watch their clients as they complete

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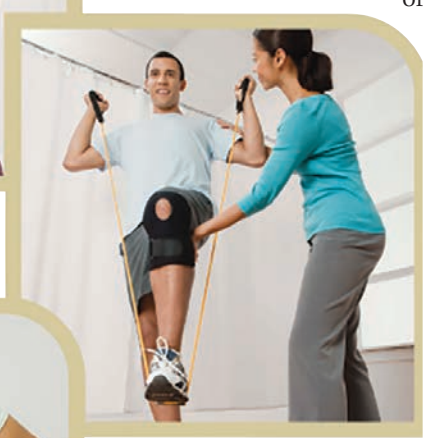

their exercises.

"We think it's important to give them that one-on-one attention to make sure they are completing it correctly," Milman said. "Even if it's a simple exercise, if you aren't doing it correctly, it's just a waste of time."

According to Milman, this approach to wellness has many benefits, the largest of which being the ability to treat the cause of pain and discomfort instead of only the symptoms.

"We would like to think that one of the benefits is well-being going forward," he said. "Hopefully, that person will get better and not need more therapy down the road."

Low-Impact

For many people looking to increase their exercise, finding a low impact approach is necessary.

"Sometime the fitness world tends to think that pushing harder is always better, but Pilates has the approach that working smarter is better," Jessica Fritz-Peters, owner of Pilates Defined in West Hartford, said.

"You don't have to jump around to get a great workout," Susan Valente, owner of Core Barre and Pilates Studio in Newington, said. "[Pilates] works the body safely and efficiently."

Initially developed as a form of rehabilitation, Pilates is a low-impact approach to wellness that has participants engaging their core muscles and can be easily individualized for the greatest results.

Another approach that Valente teaches at her studio is barre, a ballet-inspired workout that Valente similarly describes as low- or no-impact.

In addition to the effects that these programs have during a class or one-on-one session, Pilates instructor Maggie Down, owner of Personal Euphoria Pilates in Wethersfield, said that these types of exercise can have an impact on daily life.

"To me, one of the biggest benefits of Pilates is that it teaches you how to use your body properly, so whether you're walking, lifting laundry or just sitting at your desk, you're more in-tune with your body," she said.

"It's trying to make you aware of your body in all these different positions so you can transfer that to anything life may throw at you."

Both Valente and Fritz-Peters said they have seen similar benefits with their clients.

"It really comes down to strength and safety," Valente said. "The stronger you are, the safer you are in your body."

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Health & *Wellness*

about how our body and our mind connections are so interrelated," said Sandy Byrne, owner of River Rock Yoga in Wethersfield.

"The better I can feel and know my body, the more healthy I will be both emotionally and physically."

Because human beings hold stress physically, tension results.

"If we feel victorious, our bodies are open," Byrne said.

Jen Leavitt, studio manager at West Hartford Yoga, agrees.

"Yoga is the process of connecting breathing and movement, so it also is an opportunity to really start listening to your body, It's really part of a whole mindfulness experience."

Yoga has the potential to bring about a sense of calm, Leavitt said, and to become more in tune with their bodies.

"Yoga as we use the term in the western world means a lot of different things to a lot of different people," she said. "Keep working until you find what fits and know that there's really something for everyone." **RHL**

Physical Therapy Center of Rocky Hill is located at 1975 Silas Deane Highway, Rocky Hill. It can be reached at 860-513-1431. West Hartford Yoga is located at 23 Brook Street, West Hartford. It can be reached at 860-953-9642 or online at www.westhartfordyoga.com. River Rock Yoga is located at 274 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield. It can be reached at 860-757-3339 or at www.rryoga.com. Pilates Defined is located at 1143 New Britain Avenue, West Hartford. It can be reached at 860-899-1515. Core Barre and Pilates Studio is located at 85 Market Square, Newington. It can be reached at 860-938-8751. Personal Euphoria is located at 400 Hartford Avenue, Wethersfield. It can be reached at 860-748-7574

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Health & *Wellness*

Five ways to stay mentally *strong*

by Alison Jalbert
Assistant Editor

New Year's resolutions often include pledges to improve on physical strength, which is important, but an equally important area to work on is mental strength.

Being mentally strong can provide benefits in all areas of life.

Jayne Dean, a licensed marriage and family therapist and practicing psychotherapist at West Hartford Counseling Center, said there are many different aspects that make a person mentally healthy.

"They all relate to each other," she said. "If you pick one area, usually the other areas will begin to change."

Here are five ways to increase mental strength.

Take care of yourself. Basic things such as getting enough sleep, eating well and exercising are all key to being mentally strong, Dean said. It's also important to include quiet time in life, whether it's meditation, reflection, prayer, or simply taking time to rest.

Be aware of your emotions. Dean said "an expressed feeling is

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a managed feeling," meaning a person is able to identify what they are feeling and put it into words, either for themselves or to someone else. That helps manage stress and deal with emotional charges that happen in the body.

Identify bad habits and work toward breaking them. A habit is usually a way of managing stress or dealing with a need, Dean explained.

The path to eliminating that can be difficult, but it begins with a person recognizing they want to make a change and considering what need is met by what they're doing, whether it's smoking, overeating, drinking, compulsive exercising or rigidity.

"It begins there – having some compassion for yourself as to how that need came into existence," Dean said. "It starts with befriending and learning about the habit.

That contemplation period is a very, very important part of the process. There are actually things happening in your brain to shift the pattern."

Habits can't necessarily be broken overnight, but starting to shift the way in which it's thought about shifts what a person can do about it, then the actual physical changes that need to be made will eventually happen.

Have a strong social network. This is important for mental strength because it enables a person to be able to express themselves to another person, Dean said.

It also means there are people around to do pleasurable activities with, and there are positive events planned on the calendar. Having a strong social circle also makes it easier to reach out and ask for help when it's needed.

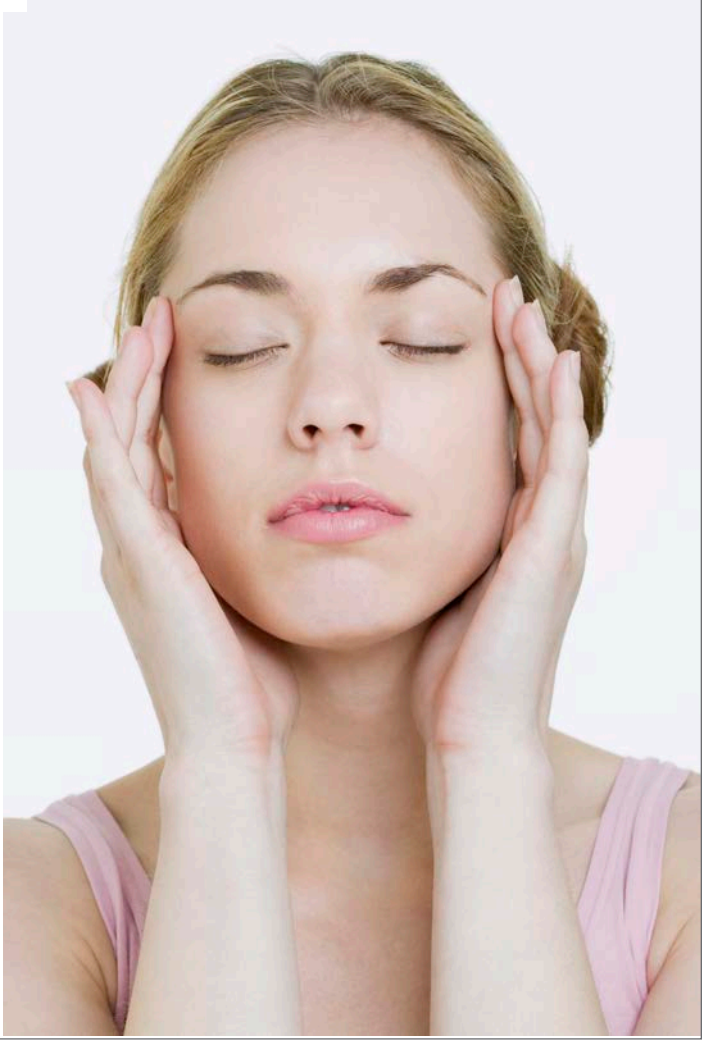
Grow by encountering the new. Seeking out and encountering new experiences, along with learning a new skill, trying something new, or simply mixing up a routine can help with mental strength.

"We can all get habituated into automatically doing the same things the same way at the same time," Dean said.

"[Changing routines] can help build those mental muscles. Mix up those patterns, mix up those things that you do every day."

This does a lot neurologically.

"Doing things new and different allows more information to bubble up, to become available and guide you in everyday life." **RHL**



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Photos by Lisa Brisson

Left: Husky Heros Liviana DiMascio, 8, Brayden Bayek, 10, and Emily Massicotte, 10, demonstrate the behaviors and actions that the school district's PBIS program instills in students.

Right: When a Stevens School student is chosen as a Husky Hero, it is because he or she has demonstrated behaviors that are consistent with the goals of PBIS.

Stevens School works to promote a better learning climate

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

Walking through the halls of Stevens School is a friendly experience. Students greet each other with waves and smiles, Principal Jason Maziarz knows them by name, and teachers ask students and staff alike how their day is going.

"All the kids respect each other," fifth-grader Emily Massicotte said. "Everyone is kind to each other, even the teachers and the students."

A positive school climate has been a broad goal at Stevens and across the state for many years. According to Maziarz, efforts have been pushed even harder in recent years.

"A few years back, the state came out with an initiative that each school come up with a plan to address school climate," he said. "We got to be as creative as we wanted to."

Stevens chose to follow a model called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS, a general behavioral system that schools can modify to fit their individual environment. The basic concept is that schools create expectations for how they would like students to behave instead of creating rules about how students should not behave.

"It's really an incentive program that works in two parts," Maziarz said. "First, you provide the kids with clearly defined expectations. Then the other end of things is we want to reward, recognize and acknowledge kids who are doing the right thing."

Those expectations are outlined in each classroom at the beginning of the year. Although each teacher can modify these expectations to fit a particular classroom, they all come down to the three ideals that are written on signs and posters throughout the school.

"Respect ourselves, respect others, respect our school," Maziarz said. "It's constantly refreshed in their minds. We end every morning announcements with those three statements."

"They have common goals and language, which makes it accessible and builds a sense of community," second grade teacher Lori Cebelius said.

"We want to make it special. We've only had about 20 of them so far this year."
–Principal Jason Maziarz

Cebelius and Maziarz are two of the staff members who serve on the PBIS Committee, comprised of teachers, social workers, administrators and staff throughout the school.

"It's like a PBIS think tank," Maziarz said. "There's about 10 staff members representing all walks of life in our school."

The committee works to find new ways to keep the PBIS initiative new and interesting.

"If you make it fresh and fun and exciting, kids will latch on to it," Maziarz said. "We've been redefining and refreshing it over the last three years."

One way to keep the program exciting is to create new incentives for students who continue to do well throughout the academic year. When teachers, administrators or other staff see students exemplifying positive behavior, they can choose to give that child a Husky Hero card.

"It's a little piece of paper, but you give it to a kid and they feel like they've been handed a million bucks," Maziarz said with a small laugh. "They really just light up."

The Husky Hero cards can be given out by any adult member of the school community, including cafeteria workers and bus drivers. When students receive a Husky Hero card, they are then presented with numerous options for what to do with it.

Within each classroom, teachers are able to create their own incentives, sometimes offering small trinkets like a pencil or colorful eraser. Maziarz said many teachers choose to also offer experiential incentives, such as extra time for reading or an extra gym or art class.

"We want them to not just want a physical item, but to start to value time," he said. "It's not always something tangible."

School-wide incentives are also offered, if students choose to utilize them. The newest addition is the ability to place their Husky Hero cards into a bucket in the main office. Maziarz will then pick students at random to earn the right to read the morning announcements over the loudspeaker.

Another incentive involves School Resource Officer Sara Raymond, who Maziarz said has been instrumental in improving the school climate.

"I try to get into the classrooms, even if it's just to pop in and say hello," Raymond, a police officer, said. "I want them to know my face."

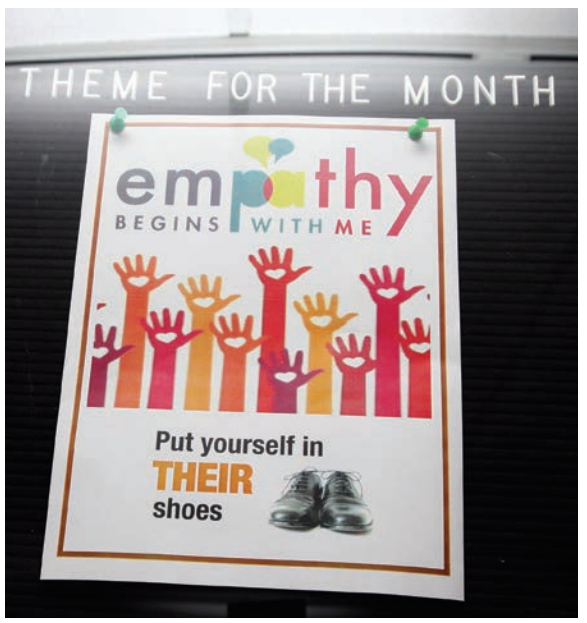
As a reward for students who earned Husky Hero cards, she has gone into some classrooms in the building to read stories to the students and has seen firsthand the benefits of the PBIS program.

"It works really well. The kids get this sense of pride," she said. "Every kid likes to be told that they're doing a good job."

Maziarz said it is this positive reinforcement that has made PBIS so successful at Stevens.

"Once you start on a program like this, it just rolls," he said. "Before, you would go into the cafeteria, for example, and see the adults supervising the room. It was looking out for who was misbehaving, but now it's the inverse of that."

The biggest addition to the PBIS program this year has been the school's themes of the month. The committee came up with a different concept for students to focus on each



Photos by Lisa Brisson

month, from December's theme of gratitude, to empathy in January and in the coming months compassion, honesty and perseverance.

"They seem like they're big concepts to these kids, but even at a young age, we think it's important for these kids to understand," Maziarz said.

Students who are found exemplifying the theme of the month can be honored with a Husky Hero Spotlight award.

"This is only for kids who go above and beyond," Maziarz said. "We want to make it special. We've only had about 20 of them so far this year. The program would never work if you didn't have everyone on board, the students, the parents and the staff, and we do," he said. "We have an incredibly supportive PTO. If you don't have all the pieces in place, it won't work."

With the school year well underway, he and the rest of the committee said they are happy with the way the program is progressing and are looking forward to finding new ways to alter and expand it to continue promoting a positive school climate.

"The best part has been that it brings the school together with a really strong sense of community," Cebelius said. "The kids demonstrate that they're working on making the school a better place. It's kind of like being a member of a big family." RHL

Left: The bus dismissal rules encourage students to read while waiting for their rides. The line of students who are exhibiting the best behavior have their bus number placed on the Bus Line Wall of Fame.

Middle: Each month at Stevens School, a new theme is introduced and students are encouraged to learn more about it and share it with others.

Right: The Husky Spotlight recognizes the positive behaviors demonstrated by students on a bulletin board.

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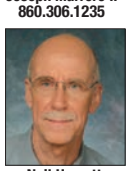

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Networking for business

Photos by Mark Jahne

The Rocky Hill Chamber of Commerce conducted a Business After Hours networking event at The Atrium at Rocky Hill.

DJ Cox, a home care consultant, greets Mary Putnam of Hot Heads Salon, a new hair care establishment.

Guests were welcomed by Executive Director Bianca Turcotte-Reome and Julie Dowd Schaub, director of community relations for parent company Benchmark Senior Living.

Chatting over cocktails are, from left, Mary Thielke of Bella Flora, Judy Patel of the Rocky Hill Community Pharmacy, and Larry and Janet Hangland of Spectrum Printing.

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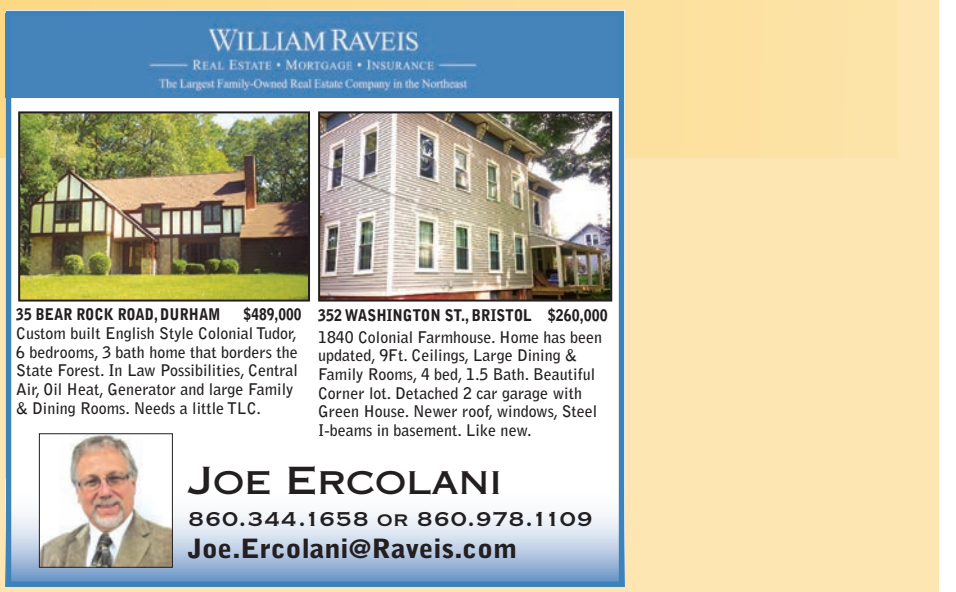
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Seeking more revenue

Town looks for ways to attract additional economic development

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Town officials would be thrilled if they could find a way to promote redevelopment of the vacant Ames Department Store property.

There are only so many ways a municipality can keep taxes down while maintaining services. One of them is to attract economic development to offset the tax burden on homeowners.

That's the job of Economic Development Director Ray Carpentino. He's always looking for businesses he can match up with available parcels of land or vacant properties.

Carpentino's greatest challenge is the lack of land zoned for business uses that is available for sale.

"We have very little available inventory for manufacturing, warehousing and industrial-type users," he said. "We have 80 some-odd acres available in Corporate Ridge Business Park."

There are 16 lots there, but they are zoned for office park use, not manufacturing, industrial or warehouse use. He said most inquiries usually involve businesses that want to purchase a building and/or property.

The town's Economic Development Commission, which Carpentino staffs, requested a zone change for those 16 lots to allow for high-tech manufacturing, but the town Plan and Zoning Commission, which has authority over zone changes, denied that request.

The town's current Plan of Conservation and Development includes a recommendation to change some zoning as well as a new zone designation along Brook Street that would allow for limited manufacturing, Carpentino said.

With just over 13 square miles of land, much of the available space for large businesses is already developed. The only other option for companies seeking to locate here is to find a vacant building that fits their needs.

"Manufacturing is high-value real estate," he said. "That's the major thrust right now."

It is highly desired by all towns because it creates good jobs and tax revenue. He added that modern-day manufacturing is a clean industry that requires highly skilled workers.

The town was engaged in a façade improvement program along the Silas Deane Highway but it was temporarily discontinued. There is still money in the budget to continue the Silas Deane streetscape improvement program.

"Those plans are currently being reviewed by the DOT" [state Department of Transportation], he said. "We do want to continue on with the façade program ... we get requests all the time."

The long-vacant Ames Department Store headquarters near the intersection of Main Street and Dividend Road remains a white elephant.

Carpentino thinks the best use would be a mixed development that includes a residential component.

He said the Town Center West project at the intersection of Cromwell Avenue and West Street is moving along. The residential portion – apartments – is nearest to completion. Also planned for the site are restaurants, retail business and office space.

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One parcel with potential for development is 1022 Elm St., behind the Big Y supermarket. A total of 26,000 square feet remains available.

"It's the only available manufacturing space in town," Carpentino said.

Business retention is also important. It's one thing to draw them here, but another thing entirely to make sure that they stay for the long haul. Carpentino said his experience has been that once businesses come to Rocky Hill, they chose to stay.

"We always get positive feedback," he said.

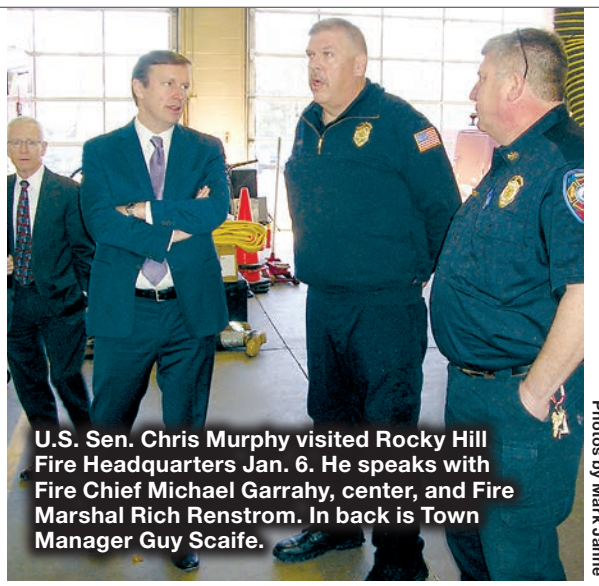
Marti Stiglich is chairwoman of the Economic Development Commission, a volunteer panel that makes recommendations to the Town Council and other local government bodies. She agreed with Carpentino that manufacturing space is limited.

She has worked with him to visit businesses of different types over the past two years as an effort to have a more public face. EDC meetings are now broadcast live on Rocky Hill Community Television.

The commission also works in cooperation with the Rocky Hill Chamber of Commerce and has a spot on each of its meeting agendas. Together, they try to highlight local business.

"I was pleased with the number of businesses we visited and talked to who said Rocky Hill was perfect for them," she said.

"We're very well positioned in the state. We have location, we have housing, we have affordable housing, great schools. We have everything. We also have a lot of rental apartments," Stiglich said.



U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy visited Rocky Hill Fire Headquarters Jan. 6. He speaks with Fire Chief Michael Garrahy, center, and Fire Marshal Rich Renstrom. In back is Town Manager Guy Scaife.

Photos by Mark Jahne

"Manufacturing is high-value real estate. That's the major thrust right now."

–Ray Carpentino

"The bottom line is we are a great town. I've been here 29 years," added the native of Queens, New York.

She cited the arrival of Arburg this past year as an economic development home run. The West Street land on which the German-based company built its North American headquarters had been vacant since 1982.

"We finally got use of the land. People are employed there," she said.

Stiglich listed the former foundry property, vacant Ames site and Town Center West as the three most important properties in town from an economic development perspective.

"Those three are in the pipeline," she said. "If we could get those three done and finished, we would have a lot of headaches removed from the town."

Ames was sold at auction in 2014 and there is some hope that the new owners will be more amendable to selling or developing the property than the prior ones, she said.

She is excited that $433,000 in grant money was acquired for the next phase of the Silas Deane streetscape project. The town needs to find an additional $200,000 to finish the job.

Another way to create revenue is to apply for applicable state and federal grants. Carpentino is doing that.

U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy visited town hall Jan. 6 to discuss grant options with Carpentino, Mayor Claudia Baio and other town staff. They covered everything from senior citizen programming to new air packs for the volunteer fire department.

The town has applied for a federal Small Cities Grant to rehab housing on School Street that is occupied under the auspices of the Rocky Hill Housing Authority. **RHL**

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News roundup

Baio holds coffee hour

Mayor Claudia Baio, left, held her first Coffee with the Mayor event Dec. 18 at Bob's Coffee Shop on New Britain Avenue. She used the opportunity to solicit donations for the town's food pantry. Accepting the contribution is town employee Nicole Philips, administrative assistant for human services.

Building a better robot

LEGO's Engineering for Kids Program recently visited the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Elementary School in town. Preschool through second grade students enrolled in the after-care program were charged with redesigning pre-programmed robots.

These robots were designed to push other robots outside the perimeter of a wrestling mat. The last robot remaining in the circular ring was declared the winner.

Fourteen robots were redesigned, helping students learn which structural properties would give their SUMO-bot the competitive edge. For example, the lower the center of gravity, the heavier the robot, and the more likely it was to win the competition.

Test homes for radon

The Central Connecticut Health District encourages residents to test their homes for radon. It is a colorless, odorless and radioactive gas that results from the natural break down of uranium in soil, rock and water.

Exposure to radon gas indoors causes more than 20,000 deaths annually across the country. It is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers.

Those interested in testing the air quality in their homes may purchase an easy-to-follow radon test kit from the health district for a price of $8. Call 860-721-2822 or see ccthd.org

Reports cards out soon

Report cards for the second quarter will be distributed at Rocky Hill High School during the week of Feb. 1 to students who do not owe fines or fees. Parents or guardians wishing a conference are urged to contact the appropriate teacher..

RHVFD bestows honors

The Rocky Hill Volunteer Fire Department held its annual Associate Member/Awards Night Dinner Dec. 4 to honor both past and present members. In addition to length of service awards, gifts were presented to each retired member.

Various honors were awarded. Firefighter of the Year awards went to Mitch Howard of Station 1, Angelo Felice of Station 2 and the entire company at Station 3.

Mayor's coffee hour

LEGO's Engineering for Kids

Paul Skidmore was named Fire Police member of the year and also received the Firefighter Association Award. The Chief's Award went to Lt. Luke Dimaria and the division firefighter of the year is Joseph Buehler.

Free adult classes offered

Adult education offers free classes for Rocky Hill residents ready to earn their high school diploma. Three high school completion options are available including the GED and the National External Diploma Program, an individualized, self-paced program without classroom instruction.

English classes for non-English speaking residents are also available for all proficiency levels. Enrollment is ongoing. Day and evening classes are available in Rocky Hill and Middletown.

For more information call 860-343-6044 or visit maect.org. **RHL**

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February calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29					

1 SCORE Business Counseling, 12:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Computer Explorers, 4:15 p.m., for grades K-2, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 8, 22 and 29

Family Story Time, 6:15 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 22 and 29

2 Career Coaching, 10 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Getting Started with Windows 10, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also 2 p.m. Feb. 4

Creative Writing, 4:15 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

CT Hearing Voices Network support group, 7 p.m., Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805-817 Old Main St., second floor classroom, 203-391-4968, also Feb. 9, 16 and 23

3 Books & Babies, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 10, 17 and 24

Preschool Math Club, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 10, 17 and 24

Using Ancestry.com and Family Search, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Minecraft Club for grades 6-12, 5:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 10, 17 and 24

CCHD Free Dental Cleaning Clinics, 8:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m., for ages 60 and older, reservations required, The Lodge at Cold Springs, 50 Cold Spring Road, 860-721-2824

4 La Leche League, 10 a.m. to noon, 23 Textbook Ave., 860-529-2307 or mgubala@sbcglobal.net

Fun for Ones, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 11, 18 and 25

ESL Classes, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 11 and 25

Crafter School, 4:15 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 11, 18 and 25

5 Mini Machines, 4 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 12 and 26

8 AARP Tax Help, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also Feb. 10, 17 and 24

8 Introduction to Social Media, 2 and 7 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

9 Hawaiian Hula, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

10 Where the Bodies Are Buried, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

10 Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 6 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@benchmarkquality.com

13 Magnificent Multiples, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Book Wars, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

16 Getting Started with Online Shopping, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Read with Toby the certified therapy dog, 4 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

17 Introduction to DNA for Genealogy, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Cocoa & Crafts, 6 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

19 LEGO Free Play, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

20 Coffee with the Mayor, 8-10 a.m., Town Line Diner, 80 Town Line Road

Rainbow Magic Book Club, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

22 Excel for Beginners, 2 and 7 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

24 Graphic Novel Book Club, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

29 Keep Your Computer Secure, 2 and 7 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7623 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

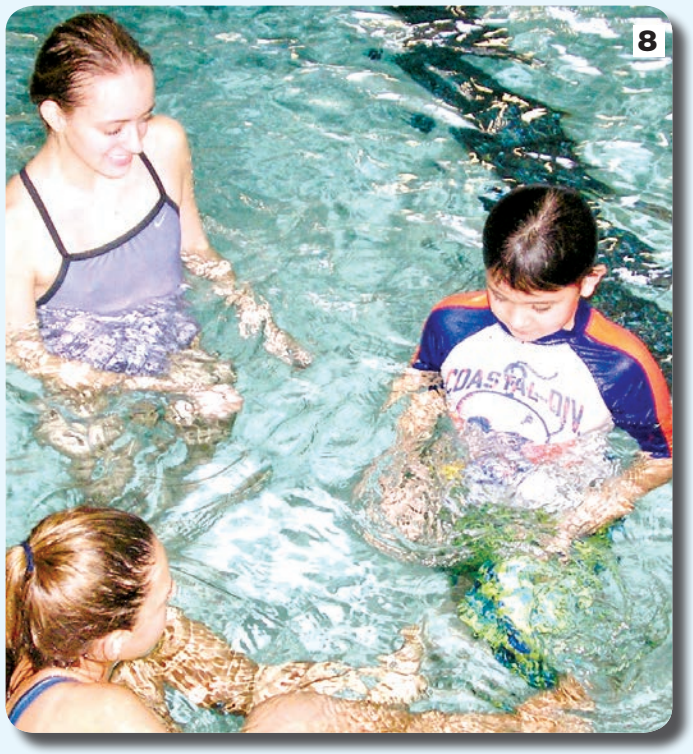
Slice of LIFE

photos by Mark Jahne

The Sea Cubs swimming program for children with special needs kicked off its third season Jan. 10 in the Rocky Hill High School pool. Members of the RHHS swim teams, under the supervision of coach Lisa Cooney, serve as mentors and enjoy time in the pool with the mostly younger children. Opening day featured 19 Sea Cubs, 37 teen mentors and four lifeguards.

Sea Cubs return to the pool

1. Lifeguard Julie Lecco kept a close eye on the swimmers. **2.** Future firefighter Ryan Fabritiis was on hand to help in the event of an emergency. **3.** Niko Pappalardo loves the attention he is getting from Holly Gamer and Kassandra Veneziano. **4.** John Fabritiis tries a different kind of basketball with buddies Callie Sullivan and Julia Simboski. **5.** Michela Dinunzio is a natural in the water, joined by Amanda Mitchell and Ashley Scacca. **6.** Gavin Dillon gets a ride. **7.** Jordan Glover chills out with buddies Steven Tomastik and Mark Catania. **8.** Matthew Adamczyk spends time in the pool with high school swimmers Kristina Machaj and Victoria Czubat. **9.** Kabilan Chinnapparajan floats under the watchful eyes of Brooke Chao and Alison Simboski. **10.** Joshua Rivera was one of the lifeguards on duty. **11.** PJ Reilly splashes around with his teenage buddy Mack Sullivan.



Your thoughts:

This month we asked residents:
"What does the Sea Cubs swimming program for children with special needs mean to you? *Here are some of their responses.*

"It's an opportunity for kids with special needs to get involved in an activity with other kids."
– Brian Dillon

"I like the fact of the high school swim teams being the buddies for the kids."
– Daniel Reppy

"[My son] Gavin can do something that he loves. He loves to swim."
– Kim Dillon

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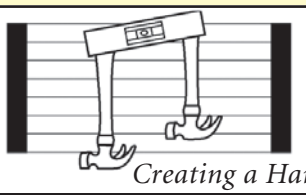

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Editorial

Holding the line on taxes

It's budget season in town, the time of year when leaders of the schools and general government sit down to figure out what to give the public in terms of services. Then they compute how much to charge in taxes to pay for those services.

It's a challenging time for elected officials. Long hours of meetings, lost family time and enough numbers to make one's head spin. They deserve credit for taking on this daunting task.

But as they do so, they need to consider certain facts.

The first is that Connecticut still has not recovered from the recession that started in the early part of this millennium and really kicked in with a vengeance in 2007. State politicians can talk all they want about a supposedly better business climate, or higher job rates, but the fact remains that far too many people are still struggling to make ends meet.

Those who are unemployed are finding it increasingly difficult to find new jobs before their benefits run out. The jobs just aren't there. So they end up taking low-wage retail or fast food jobs just to have some kind of a paycheck.

Senior citizens often talk about the pressure of living on a fixed income. The same is true for working people whose paychecks are the same every two weeks, paychecks that in many cases are lower than they were five years ago.

Businesses are asking employees to do more and paying them less. It's not that they are evil, most of them are doing it in order to survive. That's particularly true of small businesses.

It's tough for all of the folks mentioned above to read that teachers and town employees are getting raises, even if the numbers are only 1 or 2 percent.

Do they deserve it? In most cases, yes. But residents who have not received a raise in many years, and who have seen their own household costs rise, are the ones who have to pay the bills. Struggling businesses are in the same boat in terms of shouldering a higher tax burden.

Elected officials need to be cognizant of this. The hardest question they have to answer each year at budget time is how much the townspeople can afford.

Most of the money to run municipal government and schools comes from the property and motor vehicle taxes. We certainly can't look to state government for help, not with the dire financial straits it is in.

That comes from years of spending every dollar they could find as fast as they could find it and not doing any meaningful cutting. Now they want to bring highway and bridge tolls back to provide even more revenue, forgetting that they were removed because they created safety hazards.

Municipal budgets can be cut. Yes, contractual obligations make up most of the spending, but there are areas where a little trimming here and there would provide welcome relief to the taxpayers.

We would hope that the Town Council and Board of Education can do so without resorting to the old tried and true scare tactics such as limiting the number of police officers or snow plows on the street, or threatening to obliterate scholastic sports or music.

This job was never meant to be easy. Those who ran for and now serve in elective office need to do their best to keep taxes down, for the benefit of everyone. **RHL**

Letter

Public safety officials offer gratitude

To the Editor:
On behalf of the Rocky Hill fire and police departments, we would like to thank the town residents for passing the public safety referendum on Election Day, Nov. 3, 2015.

We are very excited for the opportunity that you have provided and please feel free to check our website for progress updates. Your continued support is very much appreciated and valued as we do our utmost to ensure the best level of public safety service possible to the town.

– Michael Garrahy
Fire Chief
– Michael Custer
Police Chief

rocky hill LIFE

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

An Impressive 365 Days!

Here are the highlights, records have been kept since 1905 for the Hartford Area... the location of measurement currently is Windsor Locks:

- The first quarter (January, February, and March) was the all-time coldest
- February was brutally cold with an average temperature of 16.1 degrees, making it the all-time coldest month; it was also the 3rd snowiest February with a total of 31.9 inches
- May was the warmest with an average temperature of 66.1 degrees (6.6 degrees warmer than normal)
- 18 days featured a temperature 90 degrees or higher (which is only 1 day above the annual average), the hottest temperature was 95 degrees on July 29th
- No tornadoes were reported in Connecticut, and there was no direct impact from any tropical system
- The autumn season (September, October, and November) tied for the 5th warmest on record
- The year was dry, in fact much of the state was classified in a 'moderate' drought with total precipitation at 39.21 inches, which is 6.64 inches below normal
- December goes down as the warmest with an average temperature of 43.3 degrees, an amazing 11.7 degrees above normal... more incredible: it was 4.7 degrees warmer than the previous record of 38.6 degrees in December of 1923!

We were there with you through it all in 2015, and will be there in '16 and beyond! **RHL**

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